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ABSTRACT

With each issue focusing on a different theme, volume 19 of "Inside English" looks at the cultural diversity in the community college curriculum, teaching literature at all levels, teaching writing at all levels, and the challenge of teaching English in the 1990's. In addition to regular columns on the English Council of California Two-Year Colleges (ECCTYC) and legislative concerns, the issues include the following feature articles: (1) "Cultural Diversity: A Feminist Perspective. Whose Politics? Whose Canon?" by Nancy Gray; (2) "A Primer on Chicano Literature," by Jesus J. Gonzales; (3) "'La Bamba': Film as Text," by Janet Madden and Sara Blake; (4) "Redefining the American Novel: Isabel Allende and Other Latin American Writers," by Jack Jackson; (5) "Multicultural Freshman Comp: Strategies for Infusing Cultural Diversity," by Millie M. Kidd; (6) "Rethinking the Canon: The Commonplace Book of Our Shared Culture," by Mark Nicoll-Johnson; (7) "Reader-Response Theory as a First Step in a Literature Class," by Vincent F. Piro; (8) "From Story to Poetry: Using Ballads to Bridge the Genres," by Madeline Loewe Puccioni; (9) "Traditional Literature in an Untraditional Comp Class: Myths About Convicts, and Vice Versa," by Dan Satterlee; (10) "Modifying Teaching Behavior: Encouraging Critical Thinking in a Composition Class," by Judith Rose; (11) "Developing Students' Critical Thinking and Writing: Using the Dialectical Journal," by Sheila Thorne; (12) "Rediscovering Model Essays: Teaching to the Many While Not Neglecting the Few," by Alison Kuehner; (13) "Talking Back: Personalized Cassettes and ESL (English as a Second Language) Students," by La Vergne Rosow; (14) "Helping Students Do the Thinking: Empowering Students, Enlivening Classes," by Marlene Martin; (15) "Salvage Operations and Miraculous Recoveries: Dealing With Problem Classes," by James Piper; (16) "Serving At Risk Students: Humanizing the Curriculum and the Classroom," by John F. Gardenhire; (17) "Using Classroom Assessment: Teachers as Researchers," by Jim Whearty and Kim Wolterbeek; and (18) "Breaking Down the Walls of Prejudice: Holistic Learning in the Writing Classroom," by James R. Musgrave. (JMC)

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Journal of the English Council of the California Two-Year Colleges

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Edited by
Barbara Bilson Woodruff

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ENGLISH COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA TWO-YEAR COLLEGES
CALIFORNIA REPUBLIC
ECCTYC

inside english

Vol. XIX, No. 1 | Journal of the English Council of California Two-Year Colleges | September 1991

INSIDE

inside english

ECCTYC Looks at Cultural Diversity—Its Pedagogy, Politics, and Philosophy

To help those not familiar with Chicano literature, Jesus Gonzales provides a brief but valuable bibliography. Page 3

According to Janet Madden and Sara Blake, the film *La Bamba* serves students well as both a work of cultural diversity and an introduction to multicultural literature. Page 4

Jack Jackson presents to his students the "startlingly good books" by Isabel Allende. Page 11

A multicultural approach has

CULTURAL DIVERSITY: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

Whose Politics? Whose Canon?

by NANCY GRAY
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

The following article is adapted from Professor Nancy Gray's paper delivered at the Spring 1991 meeting of the English Council of the California State University.

Universities and colleges are committed to the production and distribution of knowledge and, thus, to the production (and distribution) of knowledgeable people. But what gets constituted and packaged as knowledge and who gets to be "in the know", are not innocent activities. It has long been said that the primary mission of the university is the search for truth. This endeavor, moreover, has traditionally been grounded in a Western epistemological model of capital "K" Knowledge and capital "T" Truth as ultimately universal, to be discerned by means of Reason and Objectivity (in opposition to emotion, subjectivity, or any "special interest" borne of either). All this, it is believed, makes Knowledge and Truth, as well as the institutions and practices employed to arrive at them, apolitical. But of course, they are labeled "too political" or "special interest only" and, thus, divisive or destructive. Those whose politics go by the names of Universal Truth, Objectivity, and Reason then say that this other politics has no place in the academy except perhaps as a contained and limited object of study, certainly never as an integral component of curriculum development, much less of knowledge itself.

This is the situation facing universities and colleges at the present moment. For a good many years now, women's and civil rights movements have been making visible the suspect nature of the kind of knowledge that only some are deemed capable of, only some have access to, and only some may act upon. Women's Studies and Ethnic Studies programs have become vital parts of our campuses, though not without a struggle and as yet still not without the burdens brought about by mainstream attitudes toward race and gender as "special interest" politics pertaining only to a few (as if only a few of us—women and people of color, it would seem—have race or gender). The presence and activity of these programs have, nevertheless, gone far toward revitalizing and revolutionizing our

of women, blacks, and others" by those "whose paramount interest actually lies in attacking the West and its institutions." The Spring 1991 issue of *Campus* ("America's

valuable bibliography. Page 3

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Jack Jackson presents to his students the "startlingly good books" by Isabel Allende. Page 11

A multicultural approach has dramatically changed Millie M. Kidd's methods of teaching and assessment. Page 13

ECCTYC's 1991 Conference will take place this fall, 24-26 October, in San Diego, and promises to be a stimulating and worthwhile two days. Page 3

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Linda Riddell

production (and distribution) of knowledgeable people. But what gets constituted and packaged as knowledge and who gets to be "in the know" are not innocent activities. It has long been said that the primary mission of the university is the search for truth. This endeavor, moreover, has traditionally been grounded in a Western epistemological model of capital "K" Knowledge and capital "T" Truth as ultimately universal, to be discerned by means of Reason and Objectivity (in opposition to emotion, subjectivity, or any "special interest" borne of either). All this, it is believed, makes Knowledge and Truth, as well as the institutions and practices employed to arrive at them, apolitical. But of course, they are not.

All forms of knowledge and all practices pertaining to its production and dissemination *are* political; they are shaped by the material and cultural conditions of their histories. All

encounters with knowledge, in other words, are ideologically motivated, for no history of events or ideas is free from the ideologies that grow out of those same conditions. However, when the politics of knowledge supports the dominant cultural norm—the status quo—what results is presented not as a politics at all but as objective reality, the way things are along the way to Truth. When the politics of knowledge challenges the dominant norm and resists the status quo, it is immediately

movements have been making visible the suspect nature of the kind of knowledge that only some are deemed capable of, only some have access to, and only some may act upon. Women's Studies and Ethnic Studies programs have become vital parts of our campuses, though not without a struggle and as yet still not without the burdens brought about by mainstream attitudes toward race and gender as "special interest" politics pertaining only to a few (as if only a few of us—women and people of color, it would seem—have race or gender). The presence and activity of these programs have, nevertheless, gone far toward revitalizing and revolutionizing our relationships to knowledge. It has become more and more difficult to traffic in ideas, information, or literatures without some awareness that a politics of exclusion has been endemic to Western culture's history, resulting in a predominantly white and male paradigm of what and how we believe we can know. Despite this awareness, or perhaps in response to it, there has come about a renewed effort to "purify" the university of these political influences, to restore it to its supposed former status as an apolitical haven for seekers of truth and reason.

The controversy several years ago surrounding UC Berkeley's renovation of its Western Civilization sequence of courses so as to reflect the actual diversity of race, ethnicity, and gender in the development and present configuration of Western culture is a case in point. Objections were vociferously raised on grounds that the change was somehow destructive of Western civilization and would deny students access to the right and necessary knowledge of it. Current debates over the policies, funding decisions, and leadership of the NEA and the NEH reflect a similar diversity-v.-status-quo argument over what constitutes "real" art or scholarship. The growth of such organizations as the National Association of Scholars and publications such as the magazine *Campus* are likewise alarming in their attacks on what

of women, blacks, and others" by those "whose paramount interest actually lies in attacking the West and its institutions." The Spring 1991 issue of *Campus* ("America's Student Newspaper") displays on its cover a cartoon illustrating its lead article—"The Feminist Assault on the University"—in which three ugly witches labeled Deconstruction, Multiculturalism, and Feminism are boiling two innocent students in a pot over a fire made with books by Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, and Homer.

These anti-diversity attacks reflect "limited-pie" thinking: there are traditionally only so many slices of the pie, and the addition of slices or pie-eaters means less for those already at the table. This kind of thinking is behind attacks on feminist and ethnic studies as "starving" or silencing white males by somehow taking over the academy and forcing any but their own special-interest politics into obscurity. For those of us who work in academe as feminist scholars and proponents of cultural diversity, this comes as a major surprise. We know all too well the ongoing difficulty we have in gaining academic recognition for work in feminist or "minority" publications; we are painfully aware that despite affirmative action programs, the number of women and minorities sharply decreases at tenured and full-professor levels and is significantly less than the number of (white) males; we continue to struggle with the relegation of race and gender issues to specific courses designed to focus on them as a substitute for

(DIVERSITY, Continued on Page 8)

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Notices

CONFERENCES

22-27 November 1991. EIGHTY-FIRST ANNUAL NCTE (NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH) CONVENTION. Sheraton Hotel and Washington State Convention and Trade Center, Seattle, Washington.

Theme: "Free to Teach/Free to Learn." The conference will feature more than 270 concurrent sessions from 22-24 November, and a vast selection of one- and two-day workshops from 25-27 November.

Maxine Hong Kingston will speak at the Opening General Session banquet, Friday night, 22 November. Other fine speakers will address various sessions and speak at the luncheons Saturday and Sunday.

Registration Fees: $70 (members), $100 (non-members). Workshop Fees: $55-$90. For informtion and registration forms write: NCTE Annual Convention, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

3-7 March 1992. TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL TESOL (TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES) CONFERENCE. Vancouver, British Columbia.

For information write TESOL, Inc., 1600 Cameron Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314.

19-21 March 1992. 1992 CCCC (CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION) CONVENTION. Clarion Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio.

According to Ann Ruggles Gere, the 1992 Program Chair, the conference theme—Contexts, Communities, and Constraints: Sites of Composing and Communicating—"calls attention to the contexts in which we teach and do research; to the overlapping commu-

(NOTICES, Continued on Page 14)

inside english

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inside english welcomes articles, reviews, letters, and other writings of interest to instructors of English in two-year colleges. Submissions should be limited to no more than ten double-spaced typed pages. Although a detailed *Policy and Style Sheet* is available on request, in general follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*, *The MLA Style Manual*, and *The NCTE Guide for Non-Sexist Language*. Manuscripts should be accompanied by a cover sheet that includes the author's name, address, and

The pages of this issue of *inside english* reflect a major movement at colleges and universities across the country: the implementation of a multicultural curriculum. Accompanying this reconsideration and restructuring of individual course syllabi and institution-wide curricula are, of course, both the debate among professionals of the inherent philosophical and pedagogical issues and the accusations by the right of political correctness and by the left of ethnocentrism. We hope that the articles in this issue will stimulate discussion among colleagues in English departments throughout California, and that many of you will respond to the ideas you find expressed here.

The move toward cultural diversity or multiculturalism in the curriculum raises varied and complex issues and engenders passionate responses among both its supporters and detractors. Each of us must grapple with the questions these topics raise, both alone and with our colleagues. We must look beyond the rhetoric to try to understand the needs that have given rise to this movement: the need for us to acknowledge the significant though heretofore silent voices from our past, to listen to the varied voices of our present, and to accurately retell the events of our history.

Some fear that the "great" writers of Western culture will be displaced by "lesser" writers in an attempt to make room for works by "non-canonical" women and minorities. But if we are honest, we will admit that the so-called canon of literature today differs dramatically from the one taught in colleges and universities fifty or so years ago. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, few students in American or introductory literature classes studied works by Kate

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Send poems to Robert Rippy, *inside english* Poetry Editor, San Bernardino Valley College, 701 So. Mt. Vernon Avenue, San Bernardino, CA 92403. Send all other submissions to Barbara Bilson Woodruff, *inside english* Editor, Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90405.

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Literary canons are written on paper, not on holy tablets; they change as discovery and reconsideration occur. Canons expand and contract, reflecting the taste, needs, and awareness of readers and writers, students and professors.

Diversity, certainly, is more than an expanded canon. Diversity is the fact of each of our classrooms. Fifty years ago professors taught a generally homogeneous group of students—mostly male, white, upper or middle class, between eighteen and twenty-one. Today, our classes are filled with an equal number of women and men (sometimes, even, more predominantly female); with gays and straights; with a growing number of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and other minorities; with working-class as well as middle-class students, and even some who are on welfare; with students ranging in age from seventeen to seventy. The content of our courses should reflect the rich variety of works available to us, for the students who enter our classes depend on us to teach them honestly about the complexity of ideas and the diversity of voices that make up our particular culture and the larger world. The ways in which we teach must acknowledge the many and different ways in which people learn, and we must understand the cultural bases for these differences.

This issue of *i.e.* begins what we hope will be an ongoing dialogue about the pedagogy and philosophy of cultural diversity in the classroom. Add your voices to the discussion—debate the issues, demonstrate ways you changed your syllabus/syllabi to reflect a multicultural approach, agree or disagree with something you have read in these pages or elsewhere, evaluate a new text or reevaluate an old one. And, importantly, ask the hard questions; explore the difficulties. All of us will benefit from your struggles.

* * * *

This issue is dedicated to our past president, Jim Cagnacci, who is recuperating from a long bout with pneumonia, and with it go our best wishes for his speedy full recovery.

BARBARA BILSON WOODRUFF
Santa Monica College

LEARNING FOR TEACHING

A Primer on Chicano Literature

by JESUS J. GONZALES
Ventura College

It is almost impossible to go longer than a week without reading about "multicultural diversity" in the curriculum. And as if to underscore the intense interest in this issue, these articles are found within popular sources: daily newspapers and weekly magazines. In our discipline of composition and literature, we are urged to avoid teaching only the DWM (Dead White Males). Yet, English instructors are often reluctant to include ethnic-American authors in their classes. This reluctance is not because instructors are racist; they simply do not know the minority authors.

This exclusion is especially evident with Chicano authors; they are not published by major publishing houses. Further, many instructors remember the angry rhetoric of the Chicano authors from the sixties and seventies, such as Corky Gonzales and Alurista. Finally, most instructors believe that Chicano authors will be treated in Chicano Studies courses. Yet not only is Chicano Literature *not* treated in any social science course, but also few students, other than Chicanos, take Chicano Literature. And of course, the goal of "multicultural diversity" is to integrate the curriculum with material of all people and thus obviate the necessity for any ethnic studies course. Consequently, I hope that the bibliography that appears at the end of these brief remarks will assist English instructors to integrate Chicano authors into their curriculum, whether it be Developmental or Transfer, Composition or Literature.

Contemporary Chicano authors are treating many of the same subjects and themes that Anglo authors have treated. And the retelling, in a new context, makes the subject or theme dramatically new. Gary Soto is reiterating Wil-

ya, Elizondo, Arias—to the "emerging"—Chavez, Garcia, Trevino.

* *

Jimenez, Francisco and Gary Keller, eds. *Hispanics in the United States: An Anthology of Creative Literature.* Vol. 2. Bilingual Review/Press, 1982. ISBN 0-916950-29-8. Paperback.

This book is divided into seven themes, with about five selections of stories or poetry per theme. As in *Cuentos Chicanos*, themes provide the major focus. In all, there are thirty different authors. Some selections are entirely in Spanish, with no translation.

BOOKS BY INDIVIDUAL AUTHORS

Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands.* Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1987. ISBN 0-933216-25-4.

ANZALDUA

This intense, personal book is comprised of poetry and essays. Although it can be difficult to use in class because it has little diversity in its themes and uses so much Spanish, it does motivate others to write.

* *

Chavez, Denise. *The Last of the Menu Girls.* Arte Publico, 1986. ISBN 0-934770-46-8. Paperback.

Woody Allen. The work is set in contemporary Houston and follows the life of lawyer Andy Garcia. He interacts with his second wife, a Jewess; with his barrio family, including a brother on probation; with misunderstanding professionals, judges, and doctors. And yet, the novel ends with a ray of optimism.

* *

Santiago, Danny. *Famous all over Town.* New American Library/A Plume Book, 1984. ISBN 0-452-25511-2. Paperback.

This is similar to del Fuego's book: teenage life in East LA. But Chato Medino's barrio is decaying and so is the way of life that he has lived. However, he does not want to give up his low-rider existence. Although Santiago is an Anglo using a pseudonym, he tells an effective story.

* *

Soto, Gary. *Living up the Street.* Strawberry

(CHICANO LIT, Continued on Page 15)

ECCTYC CONFERENCE 1991

24-26 October

The Horton Grand Hotel, San Diego

Featuring

CONSTANCE CARROLL,
President of Saddleback College
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ROBIN SCARCELLA,
Director of ESL and Professor of Education, University of California, Irvine
"Teaching Language Minority Students in the Multicultural Classroom"

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also few students, other than Chicanos, take Chicano Literature. And of course, the goal of "multicultural diversity" is to integrate the curriculum with material of all people and thus obviate the necessity for any ethnic studies course. Consequently, I hope that the bibliography that appears at the end of these brief remarks will assist English instructors to integrate Chicano authors into their curriculum, whether it be Developmental or Transfer, Composition or Literature.

Contemporary Chicano authors are treating many of the same subjects and themes that Anglo authors have treated. And the retelling, in a new context, makes the subject or theme dramatically new. Gary Soto is reiterating William Saroyan in Fresno; Denise Chavez is another brooding Sylvia Plath; Lionel G. Garcia is Woody Allen in print; Laura del Fuego is a young Erica Jong. But ultimately, the best way to familiarize oneself with Chicano authors is to read them. The bibliography that follows is one for English instructors to study. It is not exhaustive nor complete; but it is suggestive of good works that may lead to other discoveries.

ANTHOLOGIES

Anaya, Rudolfo and Antonio Marquez, eds. *Cuentos Chicanos: A Short Story Anthology*. Univ. of Mexico Press, 1984. ISBN 0-8263-0772-8. Paperback.

ANAYA

These twenty-one stories touch upon all facets of life, including coming of age, middle-class anxieties, family values, migrant life. The authors range from the "established"—Ana-

ANZALDUA

This intense, personal book is comprised of poetry and essays. Although it can be difficult to use in class because it has little diversity in its themes and uses so much Spanish, it does motivate others to write.

* *

Chavez, Denise. *The Last of the Menu Girls*. Arte Publico, 1986. ISBN 0-934770-46-8. Paperback.

A young Chicana recalls several ordinary experiences: a first job, a present for her mother, a romance, struggling through college. These may be read as separate, long stories or as an integrated novel. Almost everyone can identify with the events.

* *

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. Arte Publico, 1986. ISBN 0-934770-20-4. Paperback.

This delightful book is a series of independent chapters in which Cisneros recalls childhood events with which every woman can identify. It provides a female parallel for Gary Soto's *Living up the Street*. Its simple language makes it appropriate for use in developmental classes.

* *

del Fuego, Laura. *Maravilla*. Floricanto Press, 1989. ISBN 0-915745-15-1. Paperback.

This story focuses on a high school girl in East Los Angeles who finds that she must leave her barrio to achieve success. del Fuego touches on difficulties with school, parents, police, boyfriends, and drugs. A fully integrated novel, it cannot be read easily in sections.

* *

Garcia, Lionel G. *A Shroud in the Family*. Arte Publico Press, 1987. ISBN 0-934770-71-9.

This novelist has been described as a Chicano

Teaching Language Minority Students in the Multicultural Classroom

DIANE SINOR,

Education Director at the Old Globe Theater

"Life, Love, and Laughter at the Old Globe Theater"

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Registration Fee	$85 for registration received *before* September 23 $95 for registration received *after* September 23
Hotel	$94 for a single or double room (conference rate applies for weekend as well)
Hotel Parking	$5 per day *Deadline* for conference rate: September 23
Air Travel Discounts	USAir: Call (800) 334-8644. Refer to Gold File #333-537 United: Call the United Desk, (800) 521-4041. Refer to CCLC 440 QL

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Department Chairs have been sent a detailed program, information about the hotel, and registration forms. If you need further information contact:

Conference Registration:	Nancy Nadeau	Imperial Valley	(619) 352-8320
Program:	Bob Dees	Orange Coast	(714) 432-5716
	Muriel Davis	San Diego Mesa	(619) 560-2741
Horton Grand Hotel:			(619) 544-1886
			or (800) 999-1886

ENRICHING A MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

La Bamba: Film as Text

by JANET MADDEN and SARA BLAKE
El Camino College

Introducing undergraduates to multicultural literature can be a challenging endeavor. Typically, those students who lack an appreciation and understanding of elements particular to multicultural literature often lack the vocabulary even to discuss literature and literary conventions in general. However, most undergraduates today are familiar and comfortable with the medium of film. Film critic Bernard F. Dick asserts that a "movie is a text and is similar to any text" (3). But because of its visual nature, film has a distinct advantage over a written text for literary neophytes. Through film, students can experience dramatized examples of the terms and concepts of literature; they can actually *see* literary elements at work. Consequently, encouraging students to consider a film as a text can provide them a dynamic introduction to literary

study. And a film that deals with multicultural themes can be an effective introduction to the study of multicultural literature. One such film is Luis Valdez's critical and box office success *La Bamba* (1987), the story of 1950s Latino rocker Ritchie Valens.

icles the difficulties of Ritchie's relationship with Donna. The film ends where it began, with a nightmarish plane crash. But this is no dream; along with rock headliners Big Bopper and Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens tragically dies.

As the blurb on the back of the video makes clear, *La Bamba* is concerned not just with Ritchie Valens, the man, but—more importantly—with Ritchie Valens, the myth. The film is not a documentary; it is a consciously fictionalized treatment of the bare facts of the life of the seventeen-year-old musician. Further, screenwriter Valdez's deliberate and elaborate mythologizing of Valens' life extends beyond chronicling the rock'n'roll aspects of Valens the myth, raising for students the question of the distinction between fiction and nonfiction. In the film, for example, the ancient spiritualism of Mexico, in the person of the Mexican *curandero*, becomes a force in the life, and death, of Valens. Yet, according to Valens' biographer Beverly Mendheim, this episode never actually took place.

Similarly, Valens' discovery of the Mexican folksong "La Bamba" in a Tijuana bar, as described in the film, is highly unlikely: Mendheim asserts that the song was traditionally played at Hispanic weddings and had been performed in a more popular vein by Hispanic bands in America since World War II. In fact, Ritchie is thought to have been taught to play the song by his cousin Richard "Dickie" Cota (Mendheim 62). Further, in the film, Ritchie insists on recording "La Bamba." In contrast, his producer, Bob Keane, claims in an interview that Ritchie was reluctant to record the tune, feeling that "it would demean his culture" (Keane qtd. in Mendheim 63).

Valens' relationship with Donna in the film, which suggests that the two overcame the obstacles of individual gifts and effort. The film can further be identified as *bildungsroman*, a story of growth and development, as it portrays Valenzuela's emotional and professional coming of age.

La Bamba is an ideal film for illustrating the concept of foreshadowing. Even the most nonliterary of students cannot fail to appreciate the similarity of the beginning and ending of the film. The opening scene of *La Bamba* unmistakably—and purposely on the part of Valdez—foreshadows the tragedy of the film's ending; a contemporary of Valens, Valdez himself says, "Ritchie had dreams, he had nightmares. I dramatized that" (qtd. in Mitchell 89). While the symbolism in the film may lack the subtlety that would delight a film critic, the symbols can be readily identified and appreciated by students. For example, if Donna, the blonde sweetheart of the movie, is not herself clearly representative of the American dream that Ritchie pursues, the fact that her father is an automobile salesman should clinch her symbolic identity. Conversely, the dark, sensual Rosa serves to represent the Mexico that Ritchie must ultimately reject. The house that Ritchie buys for his mother, while also associated with the American dream of single-family home ownership, carries the traditional symbolism of house as representative of the individual. Thus, students might be asked to observe details about the house which provide insight into Ritchie's values and the importance to him of family life: the gathering place for the extended Valenzuela clan, the house is purchased for his mother and brother and sisters. The talisman that Ritchie is given by the Mexican shaman is obviously tied symbolically to his good fortune, for Valdez includes a scene in which the talisman is broken shortly before Ritchie

of Hispanic and Anglo cultures.

Because film can indicate "a character's psychological state through facial expressions, action, dialogue, music and other sound effects" (Kennedy 3), *La Bamba* is also an excellent medium for teaching characterization. The half-brothers, Ritchie and Bob, have been carefully drawn as doubles, thus introducing the concept of the *Doppelganger*. Students asked to list the differences and similiarities between the two would find that Ritchie is an Anglicized Hispanic while Bob is a Chicano: the light-skinned Ritchie speaks no Spanish, has an Anglo girlfriend, changes his name to the non-Hispanic sounding Valens, "makes it" in the Anglo world. The dark-complected Bob speaks fluent Spanish, is married to an Hispanic woman, exists outside the mainstream of Anglo culture, and maintains spiritual ties with Mexico, which he visits frequently. In the film, Ritchie is the quintessential "good boy," attending school, working hard at his music, caring for his mother, while Bob is the "bad" brother, an ex-convict who sells drugs, drinks to excess, and mistreats his wife. However, for all their differences, the brothers both possess artistic talents: Ritchie has his musical ability, which ultimately takes him into the American mainstream, and Bob has the ability to draw, which he never successfully exploits.

While a number of themes may be identified in the film, two recurring literary themes, in particular, are illustrated through *La Bamba*. An obvious theme, which several critics have identified, is the Cain and Abel theme, which is revealed through the characters and actions of the two brothers. The animosity between the brothers is unmistakable; as Pauline Kael, film critic for *The New Yorker*, points out, "Whenever Ritchie is praised, Bob's eyes flash, signaling his jealousy and his misery . . . but the innocent Ritchie doesn't seem to notice that he's the cause" of his half-brother's animosity (71). Further, Bob is implicated, at least symbolically, in Ritchie's death, for

study. And a film that deals with multicultural themes can be an effective introduction to the study of multicultural literature. One such film is Luis Valdez's critical and box office success *La Bamba* (1987), the story of 1950s Latino rocker Ritchie Valens.

La Bamba, billed on the back of the video release as the story of "The Man, the Myth and the Music that brought America to its feet and catapulted 17 year-old Ritchie Valens to rock'n'roll stardom," dramatizes the meteoric rise to fame and tragic early death of America's first Hispanic rock star. The film opens with a nightmare sequence of a midair plane crash over a schoolyard full of children. The dreamer, the film's protagonist Ritchie Valenzuela, awakens in a tent in a California migrant labor camp. Panicked, he immediately searches for his cherished guitar.

The film's action begins when the Valenzuela family is joined by the oldest son, Bob Morales, who has just been released from jail and who promises the fatherless family a better and settled life. In quick succession, Bob steals Ritchie's first girlfriend, Rosa, and the family leaves the camp and settles in Pacoima, where Ritchie enrolls in school, joins a band, and falls in love with Donna, the blonde daughter of a car salesman. Soon after, Ritchie is discovered by record producer Bob Keane, and his career takes off: he changes his name, drops out of school to become a professional songwriter/performer, and buys a new car for himself and a house for his mother. The film, which highlights his hit songs "Donna," "Come On Let's Go," and "La Bamba," follows the growing conflicts between Ritchie and his brother and chron-

folksong "La Bamba" in a Tijuana bar, as described in the film, is highly unlikely: Mendheim asserts that the song was traditionally played at Hispanic weddings and had been performed in a more popular vein by Hispanic bands in America since World War II. In fact, Ritchie is thought to have been taught to play the song by his cousin Richard "Dickie" Cota (Mendheim 62). Further, in the film, Ritchie insists on recording "La Bamba." In contrast, his producer, Bob Keane, claims in an interview that Ritchie was reluctant to record the tune, feeling that "it would demean his culture" (Keane qtd. in Mendheim 63).

Valens' relationship with Donna in the film, which suggests that the two overcame the objections of Donna's father and rode off into the sunset in a convertible, is far from what his biographer and Donna herself claim to be the truth. In reality, Donna Ludwig and Ritchie never actually dated, though, according to Donna, they did "meet at parties and roller skating rinks" (qtd. in Mendheim 56). Like a piece of literature, then, *La Bamba* is a fiction and may be analyzed for fictional elements, much as a piece of literature might be.

Because film and literature share a number of conventions, film analysis can be an effective precursor of literary analysis. Concepts such as genre, foreshadowing, and symbolism as well as fictional elements such as character, setting, and theme can all be illustrated through film. For example, *La Bamba* fits into the genre popularly referred to as "bio-pic," a movie that, as its name implies, is based on the life of a real person. Further, as it relies heavily on its soundtrack, *La Bamba* fits into the sub-genre of bio-pics of musical figures. Students will be able to supply names of additional films that fall within this subgenre, such as *The Buddy Holly Story*, *Sweet Dreams* (the Patsy Cline story), and *Coal Miner's Daughter* (the Loretta Lynn story). One characteristic of this genre that students may be able to identify is the theme of rags to riches, in this case closely tied to the American dream of becoming a success as a result

the Mexico that Ritchie must ultimately reject. The house that Ritchie buys for his mother, while also associated with the American dream of single-family home ownership, carries the traditional symbolism of house as representative of the individual. Thus, students might be asked to observe details about the house which provide insight into Ritchie's values and the importance to him of family life: the gathering place for the extended Valenzuela clan, the house is purchased for his mother and brother and sisters. The talisman that Ritchie is given by the Mexican shaman is obviously tied symbolically to his good fortune, for Valdez includes a scene in which the talisman is broken shortly before Ritchie leaves on the fateful Winter Tour. Even Ritchie's voice functions symbolically, as it is representative of self expression. The song "La Bamba" itself is symbolic; through this song Ritchie gives voice to his cultural roots.

Setting also comes alive as an integral literary element of this film. Students might

be asked to identify the three principal locales in the movie: the migrant labor camp, Mexico, and Pacoima. Each of these becomes more important to the film than just a location for the action—the camp is suggestive of the poverty and exploitation of Mexican-Americans, the Mexican scenes are associated with the cultural roots of Mexican-Americans, and the Pacoima setting provides for the intersection

While a number of themes may be identified in the film, two recurring literary themes, in particular, are illustrated through *La Bamba*. An obvious theme, which several critics have identified, is the Cain and Abel theme, which is revealed through the characters and actions of the two brothers. The animosity between the brothers is unmistakable; as Pauline Kael, film critic for *The New Yorker*, points out, "Whenever Ritchie is praised, Bob's eyes flash, signaling his jealousy and his misery . . . but the innocent Ritchie doesn't seem to notice that he's the cause" of his half-brother's animosity (71). Further, Bob is implicated, at least symbolically, in Ritchie's death, for during a fight between the two Bob breaks the amulet shortly before Ritchie leaves for the Winter Tour.

In addition to the Biblical theme, a second archetypal theme in the film is that of the questing hero. Ritchie's identity as the questing hero is marked by his mother's convic-

tion, which Ritchie later shares with Donna, that he has been "saved for something special" (Valdez 61). This heroic identity is underscored by his determination to succeed in spite of significant obstacles, not only in his career, but also in his personal life. His quest, specifically, is to become a 1950s American

(LA BAMBA, *Continued on Page 5)*

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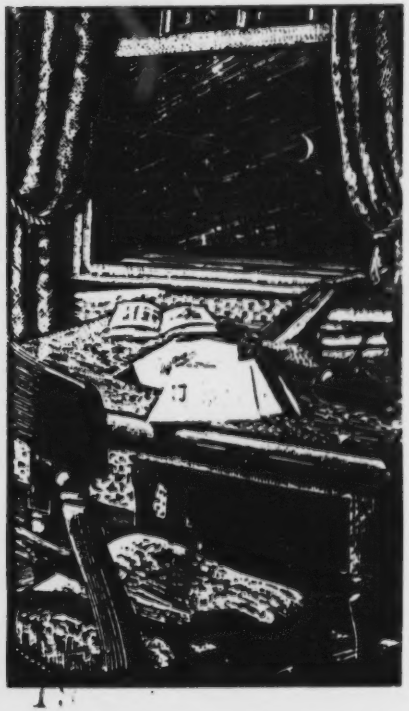
LA BAMBA

(Continued from Page 4)

rock star. Everything in his life, then, must serve in this quest as Ritchie dedicates himself to his music. It is not mere coincidence, for example, that Ritchie's guitar-playing provides the opportunity for Bob to seduce Rosa; the ethnic Rosa could only hinder Ritchie in his quest, whereas all-American Donna embodies the goal of his quest—attainment of the American dream.

Beginning students of literature quickly find that, in a foundational sense, literature focuses on the processes of discovery and understanding. One of the traditional ways to introduce



undergraduates to American literature, in particular, is to point students to the literature's focus on questions of national and individual identity. For minority and ethnic American writers who are intimately concerned with much of multicultural literature—assimilating v. maintaining cultural heritage—with both options having significant costs for individuals, families, and communities.

While Ritchie's story may look like "a picture-perfect portrait of cultural assimilation" (Podheretz 48), students can readily see the tensions in Ritchies's rise to fame which Valdez emphasizes and, in some instances, embellishes. First, there is the name change which Ritchie must make; as his brother Bob says, "with a name like [Valens], nobody'll even suspect you're a Mexican" (Valdez 70). The name change, a step towards assimilation, marks Ritchie as an individual and separates him, at least symbolically, from his family. Students might be asked to discuss the literary usages and symbolic importance of names, especially the importance of names to ethnic Americans. Ritchie's rejection of his community is suggested in his decision to sign a recording contract which does not include his band. In the film, Keane, who represents the lure of Anglo capitalism, articulates Ritchie's dilemma when he tells him, "You gotta ask yourself—what's more important—your friends or your music?" (Valdez 57A). Ritchie is further separated from his family and community as he travels across the United States in order to perform. Not only does he leave them behind physically, but his success increasingly takes him away from his roots.

As Bob's artistic failure keeps him at home, so Ritchie's artistic success takes him away from home. The tension between assimilation and cultural integrity is given life when the two brothers physically struggle, and "A bond is broken" (Valdez 109). The apparent impossibility of resolution/reconciliation is dramatized in Ritchie's final telephone conversation with his brother. Evidently, the distance between California and the snowy Midwest, like the difference between Mexican and Anglicized identity, cannot be transcended by the desire, no matter how sincere, "to have some family around me" (Valdez 113).

Another feature of multicultural literature

of Spanish and English in *La Bamba* introduces students to this concept. Further, students might be asked to examine when and where English and Spanish are used and to comment on how Valdez's choice of language influences the audience's perception of people, places, and events in the film. The song "La Bamba" itself should generate discussion in this context, as Ritchie, a non-Spanish speaker, attempts to sing in Spanish.

Like language, setting takes on a special significance in multicultural literature. In much multicultural literature, the homeland is set against the territory of acculturation/assimilation. The resultant tension not only underscores the theme but dramatizes the physical and cultural dilemma of the characters, who must physically and psychically leave the homeland in order to partake of the rewards of the dominant culture. In *La Bamba*, therefore, the power of place can be demonstrated by having students examine the relative power or lack of power associated with each of the settings. The power of Mexico lies in its spiritual heritage and cultural richness, but these have little power in the United States. The homeless migrants of the camps are powerless, for they have no "place" at all. Bob, who gives the family its first sense of place, can only get them to the ghettoized community of the "Mexican barrio" (Valdez 16). As Ritchie partakes of the power of the Anglo community, however, he is able to purchase a dream-home for the family in American suburbia. Fittingly, Ritchie's empowerment to make his family socially mobile comes through his own pursuit of Anglo success.

Although Ritchie can help his family physically get to Middle America, he is unable to break completely the barriers of prejudice against new immigrants. The prejudice of the dominant Anglo society towards ethnics, a pervasive theme of multicultural literature, is embodied in Donna's anti-Mexican father. He forbids Donna to see Ritchie because, in addition to playing "jungle music," Ritchie is, in her father's words, "a goddamn wet-

are necessary for analysis of multicultural literature. While *La Bamba* is the story of one teenaged Hispanic in a certain place at one particular time, it may function as an analogy, encouraging students to examine their own

aspirations and confusions as well as the pressures placed on them by community and family as they create their own identities. Further, the symbolic value of Ritchie Valens as a protagonist carries a universality. For at least one music critic, Ritchie is a figure who possesses "all the attributes of a genuine folk hero" (Dawson 100); to Sonny Madrid, the publisher of *Low Rider*, a successful magazine of Hispanic culture, "Ritchie was one of our success stories" (qtd. in Dawson 101); for Luis Valdez, "The fact that *La Bamba* has been accepted by audiences who don't even know any Hispanics shows that it's really about American values" (qtd. in Podheretz 49).

Whatever students decide that *La Bamba* is "about," the film serves as an effective vehicle for introducing and sensitizing them to the nuances of multicultural literature, literature that promises to reshape the way in which we study all literature.

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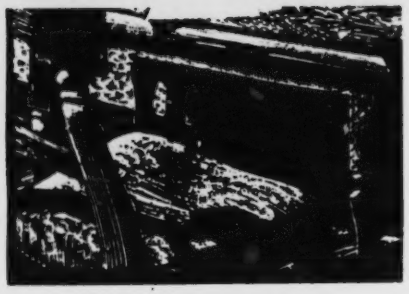

undergraduates to American literature, in particular, is to point students to the literature's focus on questions of national and individual identity. For minority and ethnic American writers who are intimately concerned with questions about "who we are" and "how we are connected to each other and to our cultural pasts," the theme of self-discovery holds a particular relevance. *La Bamba*'s portrayal of the Hispanic Valenzuela's coming of age in an Anglo society not only places the film in the thematic mainstream of American literature but provides an effective introduction to themes in multicultural literature.

La Bamba provides students a dynamic and dramatic example of the archetypal quest for what might be called a "hyphenated American" identity. From Ritchie's name change from Valenzuela to Valens to the fusion of traditional Mexican folksong and modern American rock'n'roll, which gives its name to the film, Ritchie Valens' story is replete with examples of the vexing questions that inform this quest: What is the barometer for success for the ethnic American? How far should ethnics go in order to assimilate/acculturate? To what extent would the ethnic American retain or, as in Ritchie's case, (re)discover his ethnic heritage? Which "American" values should be adopted and which ethnic values should or must be discarded?

As Valdez explores these questions in the film, he incorporates a number of elements typical of multicultural literature. The tension between the "Indian"-looking Bob (Valdez 3) and the Anglicized Ritchie, for example, mirrors the cultural conflict that informs so

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As Bob's artistic failure keeps him at home, so Ritchie's artistic success takes him away from home. The tension between assimilation and cultural integrity is given life when the two brothers physically struggle, and "A bond is broken" (Valdez 109). The apparent impossibility of resolution/reconciliation is dramatized in Ritchie's final telephone conversation with his brother. Evidently, the distance between California and the snowy Midwest, like the difference between Mexican and Anglicized identity, cannot be transcended by the desire, no matter how sincere, "to have some family around me" (Valdez 113).

Another feature of multicultural literature is syncretism, the combination of two or more forms of belief systems or practices. Typically, syncretism is demonstrated by an interweaving of Western religion and ancient myth. In *La Bamba*, however, these dual belief systems are demonstrated by the combination of ancient Mexican spiritual values and the values of 1950s America. Related to syncretism is the use in multicultural literature of folklore and myth, as well as religious and cultural symbols. In the film, the *curandero*, a Mexican folk figure, gives Ritchie a sense of invincibility through the folkloric symbol of the amulet.

The power of the amulet, because it transcends reality in Western terms, also raises the issue of magic realism, another hallmark of multicultural literature. Magic realism might be defined as "a reality produced by the imagination and shaped by a specific cultural . . . situation" (Chamberlain 8). The amulet is not just an object in which Ritchie believes but becomes a powerful force in which the audience also believes. That is, it assumes a reality that affects events: the amulet breaks, and Ritchie's plane crashes.

Code-switching, an additional element typical of multicultural literature, is exemplified in *La Bamba*. Code-switching refers to the mingling of English and non-English languages in a single work, and the juxtaposition

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Although Ritchie can help his family physically get to Middle America, he is unable to break completely the barriers of prejudice against new immigrants. The prejudice of the dominant Anglo society towards ethnics, a pervasive theme of multicultural literature, is embodied in Donna's anti-Mexican father. He forbids Donna to see Ritchie because, in addition to playing "jungle music," Ritchie is, in her father's words, "a goddamn wetback . . ." (Valdez 73). In a wider sense, because the whole of *La Bamba* chronicles

Ritchie's rise to fame against the odds, his entire success story is somewhat tentative. Ritchie's story may indeed have given 1950s immigrants the assurance "that a Mexican could make it in a white man's world" (Rocha qtd. in Dawson 101). But in the film, Ritchie's success is predicated on his ability to overcome Anglo prejudice. While this threatening prejudice may not always be overt, it appears to be always just below the surface.

La Bamba is, of course, a film; it cannot take the place of written literature. As a text, however, it can introduce undergraduates not only to elements of literary analysis in general but specifically to specialized elements that is "about," the film serves as an effective vehicle for introducing and sensitizing them to the nuances of multicultural literature, literature that promises to reshape the way in which we study all literature.

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Sara Blake and Janet Madden are both deeply interested in multicultural and interdisciplinary approaches to literature. Both are members of the English Department of El Camino College. They are the authors of Emerging Voices *(1990), a multicultural Freshman Composition reader; their multicultural English reader,* Cross-Currents, *will be published in 1992.*

TWO MULTI-CULTURAL READERS: A COMPARISON

by KARIN B. COSTELLO
Santa Monica College

The case for multicultural composition readers grows stronger daily. Our world continues its progress toward economic, cultural, and political interconnectedness, if not interdependence. We must explore our global village in every way we can. Our classes draw students from all over the world and from diverse cultures, regions, and social experiences within the United States. Good multicultural readers reflect the varied heritages and experiences of our students and illuminate what we have in common even as we celebrate our differences. They also introduce us to that larger, sometimes puzzling world in ways that encourage curiosity, understanding, and respect. Two such readers are Carol J. Verburg's *Ourselves Among Others*, Second Edition, and Marilyn Smith Layton's *Intercultural Journeys Through Reading and Writing*.

Before reviewing these books, I want to share, first, some concerns that temper my enthusiasm for multicultural readers and, second, the circumstances of my first experiment

en (*purdah*), and the ability of some cultures to comfortably believe the tenets of what appear to be mutually contradictory religions. The cultural anthropology approach opened minds; the multicultural reader put flesh and bones onto the abstractions of a discipline. It was a successful marriage of courses.

Although I am immensely grateful to my triad colleagues, I am not arguing that English teachers need to take a course in cultural anthropology in order to use a multicultural reader. Most of us aren't so lucky. We must rely instead on the quality of selections in these readers and on the books' organization and "supporting apparatus."

Both of these books offer a marvelous range of selections. *Ourselves Among Others* includes essays from all rhetorical modes, a few interviews and news reports, and more than a dozen short stories. Authors are of both literary and political stature: Vaclav Havel, Nadine Gordimer, Nelson Mandela, Benazir Bhutto, Mikhail Gorbachev, Simone de Beauvoir, Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Each section also includes at least one piece from and about the United States by writers representing a range of our subcultures. The second edition differs in three ways from the first. It includes more full-length pieces representing "ourselves." Many of the thirty-three new selections focus on recent political events: the liberation of Eastern Europe, the reorganization of the Soviet Union, apartheid and tribal warfare in South Africa, the drug trade in Colombia, the Palestinian uprising, the Tiananmen Square massacre, and the troubles in Northern Ireland. Finally, a new opening unit, "The West and the World," explores the worldwide influence of U.S. and Western culture. Despite the political timeliness of many entries, the book retains its cultural focus: it emphasizes the individual or small group experience. And the writing is consistently excellent.

Similarly, *Intercultural Journeys*' sixty-two reading selections present writers from twenty-five nations outside the United States, as a more multi-faceted and balanced understanding of the cultures represented. For example, *Ourselves Among Others*, in its section on "Women and Men: Images of the Opposite Sex," includes three pieces on the controversial subject of the role of women in Islamic societies. The first, written by a

woman of Islamic heritage who has lived all over the world, explores the historical roots of Islam and argues that Muhammad was a staunch protector and advocate of women's rights. The second, written by cultural anthropologists, describes in great detail the life of women in a remote area of modern Pakistan—and arrives at some strongly negative conclusions. The third, a short story by a contemporary Turkish writer, demonstrates the interplay among poverty, ignorance, and custom to explain the sorry state of women in a small village. These selections use history, anthropology, fiction, different times, and different locales to shed many lights on a complex topic, thus reducing the risk of over-sim-

tains some excellent insider accounts too, but most of its selections are either "objective" accounts or are stories of "insiders" uprooted from their culture and struggling to adjust to a new environment. These are stories of people in-transit, on journeys, as the book's title suggests. I would have preferred more selections that depict other cultures in their own terms, or at least from several perspectives.

These criticisms aside, I want to praise *Intercultural Journeys* for including such gems as Juanita Platero and Siyowin Miller's "Chee's Daughter" (Native American), Richard Nelson's "Tingivik Tatqiq: The Moon When Birds Fly South" (Inuit), Octavio Paz's "The Day of the Dead" (Mexican), Aharon Megged's "The Name" (Israel), Zhang Zie's "Love Must Not Be Forgotten" (Chinese), and Chinua Achebe's "An Image of Africa" (Nigerian). It's just that these excellent selections seem so isolated. They provide an intense, but very brief, tour rather than a true journey.

Evaluated on the basis of overall organization and supporting apparatus, *Ourselves Among Others* again excels. Its seven chapters group readings according to easily accessible and concrete themes: the introductory "The West and the World," "The Family," "Coming of Age," "Women and Men," "Work," "Ideology and Politics," and "Witness to War." A one-page preface introduces the themes and articles in each section. Each thematic section begins with "Looking at Ourselves," a collection of very brief observations about the unit's theme by a diverse group of U.S. writers. These pieces connect the often very "foreign" selections to more familiar U.S. perspectives

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with one, namely the first edition of *Ourselves Among Others*. I had long considered adopting such a reader for my English 1 classes but felt apprehensive because I thought my own cultural blinders and ignorance might limit my access to and perhaps distort my presentation of unfamiliar material. Then last year I had the opportunity to teach a "triad" that included English composition and both cultural and physical anthropology. A multicultural reader was my obvious choice. Furthermore, the interplay among the classes provided a support structure that compensated for whatever limitations in sensitivity or knowledge I started with. Selections in the English reader gave students imaginative and concrete illustrations of the concepts introduced in their cultural anthropology lectures. Small group work and class discussions deepened student comprehension and encouraged students to share their personal experiences and insights. Most importantly for me, the cultural anthropology lectures provided a theoretical framework (concepts, definitions, and an approach) for material that, for many students, initially seemed alien, even shocking, abnormal, and unnatural. The cultural anthropology framework defused potentially explosive topics such as arranged marriage, "shared" wives, infanticide, communal child-rearing, India's caste system, Islamic seclusion of women

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Similarly, *Intercultural Journeys*' sixty-two reading selections present writers from twenty-five nations outside the United States, as well as writers from a wide variety of cultural groups and geographical areas within this country. Selections range in difficulty and include essays, short stories, and two plays. The readings are neither as political nor as timely as those in *Ourselves Among Others*, but the

quality and diversity of prose are equally high.

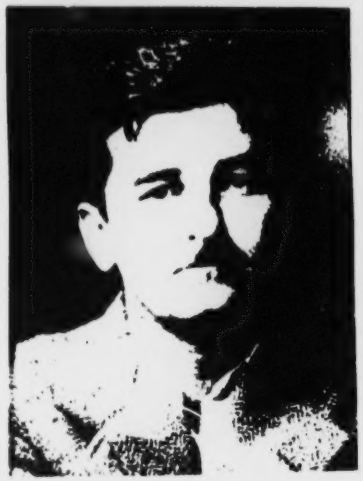
However, I prefer the selections in *Ourselves Among Others*, not for their political timeliness, but because they make possible

all over the world, explores the historical roots of Islam and argues that Muhammad was a staunch protector and advocate of women's rights. The second, written by cultural anthropologists, describes in great detail the life of women in a remote area of modern Pakistan—and arrives at some strongly negative conclusions. The third, a short story by a contemporary Turkish writer, demonstrates the interplay among poverty, ignorance, and custom to explain the sorry state of women in a small village. These selections use history, anthropology, fiction, different times, and different locales to shed many lights on a complex topic, thus reducing the risk of over-simplification, distortion, and misunderstanding.

In contrast, the selections in *Intercultural Journeys*, individually excellent though they are, remain isolated. Perspectives do not reverberate. Distortion and misunderstanding are easy. Its two selections on Islamic societies appear in different sections of the text and are not cross-referenced. One, written by an American who taught in Saudi Arabia, treats Saudi policies, culture, and religion with contempt. The other, written by an Egyptian psychiatrist who is also a feminist, uses evidence from the Koran and from history to argue a case strongly critical of Arab Muslim practices. Many Muslims and non-Muslim scholars would dispute her interpretations of both in the Koran and history, but this text offers no balancing article to suggest that other views are possible. I think that the effect, certainly unintended, is to reinforce prejudice and misunderstanding.

Another strength of *Ourselves Among Others* is its preference for "insider" accounts rather than for articles written by so-called "objective" and usually Western observers. For example, Ved Mehta's and Gyanranjan's stories depict arranged marriage and India's caste system empathetically, if not approvingly. Their "insider" perspective weaves these exotic threads of their culture into a larger fabric, where they become understandable, not merely bizarre. *Intercultural Journeys* con-

ideology and politics, and "Witness to War." A one-page preface introduces the themes and articles in each section. Each thematic section begins with "Looking at Ourselves," a collection of very brief observations about the unit's theme by a diverse group of U.S. writers. These pieces connect the often very "foreign" selections to more familiar U.S. perspectives



and concerns expressed by familiar voices. Next, headnotes for each selection provide historical, political, and biographical information. Finally, three sets of questions follow each selection: "Explorations" prods readers to a more profound analysis of the piece; "Connections" links the selection to others in the text; and "Elaborations" suggests essay and research options. These provide a beautifully sequenced and expansive follow-up. To further facilitate connections, the book includes a geographic index that directs readers to other headnotes and articles about the country covered in that selection. A short appendix explains the European Community, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the Warsaw Pact. Finally, a very readable map locates every country mentioned in the book's selections.

In contrast to the thoughtful, thorough organization of *Ourselves Among Others, Inter*

(REVIEWS, Continued on Page 7)

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REVIEWS

(Continued from Page 6)

cultural Journeys' organization is casual. Its most coherent chapters have clearly focused themes: "The Challenges of Intercultural Experience," "Matters of Love and Family," "Departures, Journeys and (Sometimes) Returns," and "Cultural Exchanges in Study and Work." Other chapters, although they contain some of the best selections in the book, appear to be grab-bag affairs, as their titles suggest: "Patterns, Habits, and Values of Culture," "Culture and Language, Body Language, and Perception," "Encountering American Patterns of

Culture," and "Defining Ourselves and Others." A brief preface introduces each chapter. A "Before you read" paragraph prompts students to write a personal respose to the theme to be developed in the selection; this pre-reading exercise is a nice touch because it encourages students to connect their own experiences to the material they are about to read.

Intercultural Journeys' editor, Marilyn Layton, says of her headnotes, "Because tomorrow's literature will be written by the students in classes now, I introduce the readings by exploring both the writers' lives and their insights about writing" (xix). While fascinating, the headnotes would be more helpful manuals support the teacher. The manual for *Ourselves Among Others* predictably provides more detailed, thorough guidance: suggestions for getting the course off the ground; sample syllabi adapting the text to different types of courses; introductions to each unit suggesting subthemes, correspondences outside the text, and combinations; discussion of all Explorations and Connections questions, with particular attention to possible student reaction to more controversial pieces; additional questions to improve comprehension and stimulate writing; a rhetorical index; additional research resources; and a list of film, video and audio-cassette resources.

The manual for *Intercultural Journeys* focuses more on student writing (individual and group essays and research projects), less on helping the instructor organize the course and competently present the multicultural material. Editor Layton provides an excellent model for peer-group editing, eight detailed writing assignments using selections from the book as models, twenty writing assignments about selections from the book, eleven research topics, and thirteen collaborative writing assignments. I especially enjoyed her annotated list of more than thirty novels and books from diverse cultures. Her choices are sensitive, wide-ranging, and accompanied by excellent comments. She also includes sample study guides for three of the novels and an extended bibliography for teaching and exploring culture.

My clear preference for *Ourselves Among Others* is based on the concern I expressed at the beginning of this review: multicultural material requires knowledgeable and sensitive presentation. It is too easy to offend individuals and to misrepresent cultures, however unintentionally. I believe that this book superbly prepares the teacher and guides the student through a wealth of multicultural information and experience. Its organization makes individual selections and unifying themes echo against each other. The comprehension

☐ Verburg, Carol J., ed. *Ourselves Among Others*, 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1991. 704 pages.

☐ Layton, Marilyn Smith, ed. *Intercultural Journeys Through Reading and Writing*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991. 635 pages.

Karin Costello teaches literature and composition at Santa Monica College. She formerly taught at UCLA in UCLA's writing programs and English department and is committed to culturally diverse education.

A CLASSROOM MOSAIC

by MICHELLE PAGNI
Riverside Community College

Instructors who are beginning to feel inundated by the multicultural texts that are coming out in droves these days should not ignore Barbara Roche Rico and Sandra Mano's *American Mosaic*. Rico and Mano have not merely put together another multicultural text; in fact, the book's premise goes beyond including selections from authors of different cultures. Instead, it contextualizes the readings, placing them within their historical context. This unusual format provides for an interesting and informative textbook, which allows for a variety of teaching styles and emphases.

Each of nine sections has a different cultural focus: the text begins with selections by and about early immigrants and then proceeds through various cultures such as Chinese, African, Puerto Rican, Japanese American, African American, Chicano, and Native American, ending with contemporary voices. While these classifications may seem to isolate the groups' voices, they complement the book's structure, which places the pieces in historical context. Each section begins by explaining the history of the group and how the group was treated in the United States. Next, Rico and Mano posit pre-reading ideas that encourage readers to consider what circumstances were like historically for the groups before the read-

to be adapted for a variety of classroom focuses and teaching styles/emphases.

While instructors may not be familiar with many of the authors collected in *American Mosaic*, some are renown for their writing ability, which should placate those who often criticize multicultural texts as being sub-literary. Zora Neale Hurston's "Sweat," a selection from Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*, and Jacob Riis' "Genesis of the Tenement" are included, as are works by Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, Ralph Ellison, Jose Antonio Villarreal, Pat Mora, Paula Gunn Allen, Mike Rose, and Alice Walker, to name a few.

The possibilities for teaching a class using *American Mosaic* are many; in particular, the combination of history, prose, poetry, and scholarly work is an exciting way to broaden students' reading and thinking skills as well as to broaden their own notions—or overcame their ignorance—of cultures. The book encourages a range of assignments. In addition to those that Rico and Mano suggest, the selections themselves generate ideas and assignments.

The Instructor's Manual groups essays around themes rather than cultures, for those who prefer a thematic emphasis. Some themes they have suggested include The American Dream, Assimiliation, Discrimination, Education, Generations, Language, Traditions,

Culture," and "Defining Ourselves and Others." A brief preface introduces each chapter. A "Before you read" paragraph prompts students to write a personal respose to the theme to be developed in the selection; this pre-reading exercise is a nice touch because it encourages students to connect their own experiences to the material they are about to read.

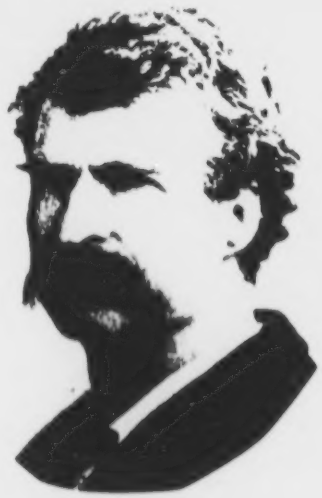
Intercultural Journeys' editor, Marilyn Layton, says of her headnotes, "Because tomorrow's literature will be written by the students in classes now, I introduce the readings by exploring both the writers' lives and their insights about writing" (xix). While fascinating, the headnotes would be more helpful if they also discussed the culture, history, and politics of the country.

Equally disappointing are the five or six "Questions for Discussion and Writing" that follow each selection. Most merely review content, the "who, what, where, and when" of the selection. Seldom do they address tone, troubling questions about theme or the author's stance, the article's logic or its assumptions. This deficiency is particularly disturbing in connection with an article like Lawrence Stessin's "Culture Shock and the American Business Overseas." Stessin, an experienced journalist, editor, professor of management, and diplomat, urges American businessmen to learn the customs and culture of other countries, but his tone reveals his assumption of American superiority. He may have learned how to behave, but his attitude remains patronizing and insular. Editor Layton's headnotes or follow-up questions should have pointed out the ironic disparity between Stessin's avowed purpose and the attitudes his article reveals.

Another small but telling point is the map at the front of *Intercultural Journeys*. It shows the globe as it was known in 1686. Charming, but archaic; it won't help students who turn from a selection in the book to a map trying to find the country where the article takes place.

In different ways, both books' instructor's comments. She also includes sample study guides for three of the novels and an extended bibliography for teaching and exploring culture.

My clear preference for *Ourselves Among Others* is based on the concern I expressed at the beginning of this review: multicultural material requires knowledgeable and sensitive presentation. It is too easy to offend individuals and to misrepresent cultures, however unintentionally. I believe that this book superbly prepares the teacher and guides the student through a wealth of multicultural information and experience. Its organization makes individual selections and unifying themes echo against each other. The comprehension questions and writing suggestions provoke thoughtful responses and offer students a wide range of writing opportunities. Overall, this is a superior book.



Intercultural Journeys collects an extraordinary array of fine writing and diverse voices from around the world and within the United States. But given the diversity, novelty, and difficulty of the material, I believe that most teachers and students would appreciate more help in interpreting and making connections among the selections.

Each of nine sections has a different cultural focus: the text begins with selections by and about early immigrants and then proceeds through various cultures such as Chinese, African, Puerto Rican, Japanese American, African American, Chicano, and Native American, ending with contemporary voices. While these classifications may seem to isolate the groups' voices, they complement the book's structure, which places the pieces in historical context. Each section begins by explaining the history of the group and how the group was treated in the United States. Next, Rico and Mano posit pre-reading ideas that encourage readers to consider what circumstances were like historically for the groups, before the readers actually experience the situations through the selections.

Additionally, each section presents an excerpt from a legal document, which allows students to consider how the dominant culture responded to the ethnic groups. The first section, for example, contains *The Bill of Rights*; other legal documents include *The Foraker Act* (which established a civil government in Puerto Rico under an American military governor), an excerpt from *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka*, and *The Indian Removal Act*. After the readings, which range from narrative to oration to fiction and poetry, each section contains an academic essay under the subtitle "Reflecting a Critical Context"; these essays are meant not only to give students a sense of what academicians are saying about the cultures but also to exhibit a cross-disciplinary study of cultures and ideas.

Most teachers will find the critical thinking and writing ideas that are included at the end of each section particularly beneficial. They allow for a variety of responses, ranging from personal writing to group work. Some ideas call for expository writing, some for argumentation; many require research, which varies in scope. Each section also contains references and additional sources to give students a place to start in the library. Consequently, Rico and Mano's range of ideas allows for the text

Women, and Working Conditions. The Instructor's Manual also lists films that can be used in conjunction with the various sections of the book. Because most of the films are distributed by lesser-known companies, Rico and Mano have included the addresses of the producers/distributors.

American Mosaic, as its name suggests, contains a multiplicity of selections, ideas, and possibilities. Anyone interested in multicultural texts should look at this fine book.

☐ Rico, Barbara Roche and Sandra Mano. *American Mosaic: Multicultural Readings in Context*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991. 720 pages.

Michelle Pagni teaches part-time in the English department at Riverside Community College while working on her PhD in English at the University of California, Riverside.

RAINBOW COALITIONS

by **TONI EMPRINGHAM**
El Camino College

Scanning recently published freshman composition readers, I was struck by the paradox

(REVIEWS, Continued on Page 16)

DIVERSITY

(Continued from Page 1)

the inclusion or even acknowledgement of those issues in the rest of the curriculum. We understand that the system's politics of difference has created "othered" voices as oppositional contrasts to the voices of normative dominance, and that those othered voices are perceived as dangerous, in need of being coopted or ousted the moment they begin to have an effect and will not go away or shut up.

English departments have traditionally offered the study of Anglo-American literature as if it were sufficient and representative, indeed definitive, of our culture. They have designed courses and selected texts as if the best of this culture's literature (the canon) were universal in theme, as if "the human condition" were adequately represented by primarily male, primarily white writers and thinkers whose artistic heritage is imagined as coming to them in a more or less pure and direct line from classical Greece and Rome through western Europe to the national parameters of Britain and the United States. Even the welcome revisions of widely used anthologies such as the Norton still tend to favor white and male authors while underrepresenting or ignoring women, racial and ethnic minority writers, Commonwealth writers, gay or lesbian literature. Gilbert and Gubar's *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* seeks to correct this hegemony, yet reproduces it in part by excluding Chicana and Italian-American women writers on the grounds that their literary movements are "too recent" to take fully into account. Any Women Writers course that focuses on the female "greats" (however revo-

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influences that shape our literatures and our access or responses to them—that is, as influences that shape what we believe we can know and thus what is known.

In fact, Western culture is not monolithic in its history, nor has it been the only designer of the arts, literatures, and ideas we hold dear for their aesthetic value and impact on the development of "Western civilization." But insofar as our institutions claim the traditions of normative dominance (white, male, heterosexual, economically mobile, decidedly WASPish, etc.) as the only legitimate representation of Western culture, they distort our realities in the service of exclusionary politics masquerading as Knowledge and Truth. They maintain the boundaries between privilege and disprivilege, between those "in the know" and those not, as guarantors of a systematic structure in which difference produces meaning by virtue of oppositional dualities arranged hierarchically on a scale of value (good/bad, white/black, man/woman, civilization/nature). They produce and disseminate knowledge borne of an epistemological paradigm in which the boundaries are conceptualized as definitional and the hierarchy as inevitable and natural. Those who speak the "master discourses" of this system have power; they get jobs, rank, tenure, and admission into the club; they make the grade. Those who resist or call attention to the politics of the system and its mastery pay the price of exclusion, second-class status, or attack.

Because the costs of exclusion can be high, the credibility that is seemingly conferred by adopting and adapting to the discourses of power can be remarkably seductive. Wanting in on the benefits of a system that bestows privilege is understandable, given the alternative that system offers on the other side of its either/or positions. However, when we forget that privilege in such a system requires the maintenance of disprivilege for the integrity of its structure, we buy into the very politics we may have

nism falls into a "gender-only" perspective, it privileges difference between men and women over differences among women, thereby ignoring the complexities of women's experiences of privilege and oppression brought about by the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality with gender. It in effect

buys into a politics of difference whereby "self" is defined against an "other." It invests in the patriarchal habit of conflating all women into one, in versions of either good woman or bad, and reproduces normative dominance by assuming that one to fit or desire to fit the cultural norm: white, middle-class, heterosexual, preferably Christian. Women's movements have been called to task for this more than once. It is also the business of feminists, then, to monitor ourselves as well as the systems in which we live and work against behaving like cultural and gender imperialists.

At its best, feminist politics makes visible and disrupts the codes that produce gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality as either obstacles or accesses to knowledge. In the classroom we can do this by acknowledging our own problematic or shifting relations to power and privilege; by discussing the politics of choosing texts and how we present them; by becoming and staying aware of whom we call on, make eye contact with, encourage to speak up; by consciously considering what

It is long past time for universities and colleges to take account of the diversity of their heritage and engage the realities of their role as an arbiter of cultural truths and knowledge. The existence of feminism, women's and ethnic studies programs, any and all advocacy of multicultural literacy on our campuses is far from a problem, but is rather an opportunity hard won and vital to our growth as knowledgeable human beings. As I once heard a speaker say at a conference on feminist multicultural politics, "Most people don't change because they see the light, but because they feel the heat." It's time, again, to turn up the heat.

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Nancy Gray earned her Ph.D. from the University of Washington. She directed a Women Studies program for three years, has taught both at community colleges and at universities, and continues to teach literature and writing from a decidedly deconstructionist, multicultural, feminist perspective.

PLATO TREE

(For Joe Cooper)

Having taught for forty years, he knew
them well: the preacher kids intent
to win the world in Jesus' name.

And brought that day a tree laden
with cocoons, and set it on his desk, 32
and went on talking of Plato.

Befuddled with words, those certain minds
drifted aside, till, witnessing

racial and ethnic minority writers, Commonwealth writers, gay or lesbian literature. Gilbert and Gubar's *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* seeks to correct this hegemony, yet reproduces it in part by excluding Chicana and Italian-American women writers on the grounds that their literary movements are "too recent" to take fully into account. Any Women Writers course that focuses on the female "greats" (however revo-

lutionary that concept in itself may be) as if they were merely regendered clones of the old familiar male "greats" neglects to intervene in the culture's systematic hegemony in any thorough or lasting way.

When we teachers of literature (or of any discipline) take as our tradition the actual diversity of our cultural heritage, we radically alter our access to knowledge and its production. In the United States, for instance, this means an open engagement with that heritage as Anglo-American, Euro-American, Native American, African-American, Asian-American, Chicano/a and Latino/a (also including the diversities within each of those categories); as both and equitably male and female; and as international in scope and influence. We simply cannot afford to perpetuate a monolithic world view as if it were sufficient or true. No matter our specialties, we must at the very least acknowledge the politics of our positions, our curricula, our paradigmatic assumptions, and our relations to power. In so doing, we will and must incorporate issues of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality as or call attention to the politics of the system and its mastery pay the price of exclusion, second-class status, or attack.

Because the costs of exclusion can be high, the credibility that is seemingly conferred by adopting and adapting to the discourses of power can be remarkably seductive. Wanting in on the benefits of a system that bestows privilege is understandable, given the alternative that system offers on the other side of its either/or positions. However, when we forget that privilege in such a system requires the maintenance of disprivilege for the integrity of its structure, we buy into the very politics we may have set out to resist, the politics that defines inclusion by exclusion. For those of us positioned on the "outside" wanting "in," this is really a matter of assimilation to the dominative norm, a norm designed without our interests or welfare in mind. We must talk and act like "one of the boys" if we are to be admitted to the hallowed halls. No matter what outsider interests we bring with us, or whether we continue to criticize the system once inside, great pressure will be brought to bear on us to fall into line, to assimilate. The system often expands to seem to include even its most determined critics, but it readily admits only its "safest" critics, those who want in on the existing structure and will settle for add-and-stir reforms rather than insist on a radical re-visioning of the structure itself.

It is the business of feminist politics (for one) to account for, resist, challenge, and radicalize our relation to the system and to the forms of knowledge and truth it embodies. Feminism seeks to intervene for activist learning in which all voices are interactive. There is no such thing as single-vision feminist politics; rather it is based on recognition of and engagement with multiplicity, however contentious it may at times become. The only thing feminist theories and practices always have in common is the taking of a position in relation to gender. However, when feminists have been called to task for this more than once. It is also the business of feminists, then, to monitor ourselves as well as the systems in which we live and work against behaving like cultural and gender imperialists.

At its best, feminist politics makes visible and disrupts the codes that produce gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality as either obstacles or accesses to knowledge. In the classroom we can do this by acknowledging our own problematic or shifting relations to power and privilege; by discussing the politics of choosing texts and how we present them; by becoming and staying aware of whom we call on, make eye contact with, encourage to speak up; by consciously considering what questions we pose and how we influence the responses; by interrogating our assumptions (and how we come by them) about which information, ideas, literatures we invest with authority and which we regard as side-issues, perhaps interesting but after all unnecessary. This involves calling attention to differences as interactive (rather than definitional or divisive); it brings into the open the political nature of all forms of knowledge and of the institutions that make knowledge their business. It politicizes the university and the college.

Certainly this kind of openly engaged political consciousness can and does cause trouble. But this kind of trouble is worth it. It makes the system nervous and foments to-the-root change. It also at least as often as not calls forth an overwhelmingly positive response from students, especially but not exclusively those students whose voices have always been labeled "minority," a.k.a. special interest and not good enough. They suddenly have positions to take; they find themselves to be subjects rather than objects of discourse. The forms of knowledge and the stories passed on in their classrooms include them; they may even take part in new and viable productions of knowledge as they interact with it empowered by accesses to it that deem them already knowledgeable in some way. This, too, is the business of feminist politics.

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And brought that day a tree laden
with cocoons, and set it on his desk,
and went on talking of Plato.

Befuddled with words, those certain minds
drifted aside, till, witnessing
birth, they soared on sudden wings.

JIM EWING
Fresno College

Mr. Ewing teaches writing—both expository and creative—full time at FCC. He hopes soon to finish his book of poems Escape from Scotland *and have it published in his native country. He tells us, "Although I was indoctrinated in publish-perish, I have no interest in publishing in journals that my colleagues and I don't read."*

INTERSECTION AND CIRCUMFERENCE

As I look back
on one of Donne's machines
    the compass
Or even back to Jesus
    his cross
All this first technology
So clear to see
Seems to say
Through the arc
And the ache
    to contact
Come to me

PHILIP VALLICELLA
Glendale College

Philip Vallicella teaches English and keeps a compost heap.

$ACRAMENTO $CENE

Decisions and Revisions

by KAREN S. GROSZ
Santa Monica College

We welcome to the pages of inside english *Karen Sue Grosz, Professor of English at Santa Monica College—a worthy successor to our former Sacramento correspondent, Gordon Taylor. Having served two consecutive terms as president of the statewide Academic Senate and one term as the faculty representative on the Board of Governors, Professor Grosz brings to "Sacramento Scene" her experience with and understanding of the complexities of state and local issues and the vagaries of legislation and legislators. Her expertise will help us read "between the lines" to understand the true intent of a given piece of legislation or statement from the Chancellor's office. Through reading her column, we will not only better understand the issues facing us as professionals but become better able to communicate intelligently on these issues with our state representatives, our chancellor, our administrators, and our colleagues.*

Among the major items of interest to Sacramento lawmakers as we head into the fall of 1991 are the continuing budget problems, with financing of education a focus of concern, curbs on free speech in the form of campus policies limiting students in their freedom to express opinions, new recognition of undocumented students as out-of-state (rather than resident) students subject to higher admission fees, and matriculation legislation that would seek to dictate to community college professors limitations in their right to determine appropriate placement of students when they begin their college study, as well as the determination of basic skills prerequisites for college courses. Two items of legislation have been introduced from the previous session: Hart's transfer bill and Hayden's Master Plan bill. The attempts of the Chancellor's office to deal with federal mandates that students demonstrate an ability to benefit from college instruction have resulted in a bill designed to exempt the California Community Colleges from those federal provisions. And a bill has been introduced in response to two community college districts' attempts to generate additional funding under full-time to part-time faculty ratio provisions of AB 1725 by reassigning administrators to the classroom. Finally, the state legislature has proposed a $5,000 Professor of the Year Award in recognition of outstanding teaching of undergraduate nia State University both feel that the increases for K-12 and two-year colleges invariably come at their expense.

Indeed, when the budget battle ended, it was obvious that the community colleges fared well in comparison with the other higher education segments, for the Proposition 98 funding provisions held. To help offset its deep funding cuts, the UC has increased student fees 40 percent this fall, and the CSU not only boosted student fees by 20 percent, but also cancelled a significant number of classes as a way to control expenses. The Board of Governors sponsored legislation to hold community college student fees at the current $50 per semester level (SB 381, Presley), and Assembly Member Tom Hayden, chair of the Higher Education subcommittee of the state Assembly, argued for holding two-year student fees at that level. But the amended legislation mandates a compromise increase of 20 percent, moving to $60 per semester for fall of 1991. This fee increase brings approximately $15 million to the California Community Colleges this year.

Freedom of Speech

The issue of political correctness appears to have influenced legislation at both the state and federal levels in the form of legislation banning speech codes as a means of preserving freedom of speech. Washington, D.C., legislators have before them S. 1484 (Senator Craig, R-Idaho), a speech codes bill requiring colleges and universities to bar speech codes on campus or lose their eligibility for federal student aid funds. Sacramento legislators, on the other hand, must respond to SB 1115 (Leonard), which makes federal and state Constitution provisions for free speech applicable to students in public or private secondary and postsecondary institutions, and also gives students the right to file civil action against an institution that enforces a rule in violation of this freedom. The legislation clearly comes in response to the adoption of policies prohibiting racist or "hate speech," policies that schools and colleges have used to curb student speech aimed against a minority group.

(SACRAMENTO SCENE, Continued on Page 10)

INDIVIDUAL SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIPS OFFERED

In order to continue to be an *effective* voice in English education for the California Two-Year Colleges, we are asking your support by becoming a sustaining member of ECCTYC. Previously we have relied on institutional membership/subscriptions to maintain *inside english* and our other endeavors. More and more of our activities are centered on timely responses to current issues such as testing, assessment/placement, and workload, and our financial base needs to be broadened to include more frequent mailings to department chairs, more regional activities for teachers and chairs, and more representation at key meetings. Thus, we are appealing to you to support ECCTYC, the only organization devoted solely to the professional concerns of Calfornia community college English teachers, by becoming a sustaining member for $15 a year.

The English Council of the California Two-Year Colleges represents and serves the profession in a number of significant ways:

1. ECCTYC promotes excellence in teaching by
   - publishing *inside english*, a journal for Calfornia community college instructors
   - sponsoring biennial conferences alternating between south and north locations
   - conducting south and north meetings of English chairs
   - conducting regional meetings
   - sponsoring literature conferences at Lake Arrowhead
   - publishing a newsletter for Chairs, *ChairSpeak*
2. ECCTYC represents the interests of English teachers throughout the state by
   - preparing workload studies

that would seek to dictate to community college professors limitations in their right to determine appropriate placement of students when they begin their college study, as well as the determination of basic skills prerequisites for college courses. Two items of legislation have been introduced from the previous session: Hart's transfer bill and Hayden's Master Plan bill. The attempts of the Chancellor's office to deal with federal mandates that students demonstrate an ability to benefit from college instruction have resulted in a bill designed to exempt the California Community Colleges from those federal provisions. And a bill has been introduced in response to two community college districts' attempts to generate additional funding under full-time to part-time faculty ratio provisions of AB 1725 by reassigning administrators to the classroom. Finally, the state legislature has proposed a $5,000 Professor of the Year Award in recognition of outstanding teaching of undergraduate students.

Budget Battle

Governor Pete Wilson discovered in the spring and summer of 1991 that hammering out a budget agreement with the California legislature is no easy matter. The first target was Proposition 98, with its guarantees for K-12 and community college allocations. This provision, the result of statewide voter support for more stable funding for secondary and community college education, has proved to be a political football of sorts, creating tension not only within the political arena, but also in higher education, as the University of California and Califor-

chairs, and more representation at key meetings. Thus, we are appealing to you to support ECCTYC, the only organization devoted solely to the professional concerns of Calfornia community college English teachers, by becoming a sustaining member for $15 a year.

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2. ECCTYC represents the interests of English teachers throughout the state by
   - preparing workload studies
   - advocating for community college interests in UC and CSU, and with legislators
3. ECCTYC has appointees to the state committees on
   - Basic Skills Assessment
   - California Writing Project
   - Intersegmental Coordinating Committee (ICC) English Assessment Committee
   - Basic Skills—Academic Senate
4. ECCTYC sends representatives to
   - the CSU and UC English Councils
   - the CSU Composition Committee
   - CSU Literacy Committee
5. ECCTYC has developed liaisons to better represent community college interests with
   - the State Chancellor's office
   - the Academic Senate
   - the State Department of Education
   - the State Legislature
   - California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC)
   - organizations such as CATESOL/TESOL, MLA, CATE, NCTE, CCCC
   - California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP)

For more information about the organization see "President's Perspective" in the October 1990 issue of *inside english*.

Department chairs have been sent application forms. Please ask your chair for a copy of the form and send your membership application to

Mr. William Decker, Membership Co-Chair
Language Arts Division
College of the Sequoias
915 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93277
(209) 733-2050

SACRAMENTO SCENE

(Continued from Page 9)

High school students have enjoyed freedom of expression as a result of the 1969 decision in *Tinker v. Des Moines*, a landmark case that came down on the side of students who wore black arm bands to protest against the Vietnam War and were subsequently expelled. In that decision, the courts ruled that students have freedom of speech so long as they do not disrupt school operations, and the elements of time, place, and manner became significant in determining what constitutes disruption. Over the years since the *Tinker* decisions, however, the political tables have tilted, and school officials now seek to impose policies that protect students from the prejudiced views of their peers. Thus, the very individuals who would have sided with the free-speech rights of the Vietnam protestors in 1969 now find themselves on the opposite side of the argument, wanting to restrict the free-speech rights of students whose views they find objectionable.

In 1989, college and university officials discovered, as a result of *Doe v. University of Michigan*, that campus speech codes can be ruled unconstitutional. College and university officials have found that crafting a campus speech code takes careful thought and legal advice. Now, these pieces of legislation suggest that another approach may be necessary. The state legislation, incidentally, has the support of the ACLU, California Young Democrats and Young Republicans, and the California Newspaper Publishers Association, with opposition from the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.

Enrollment of Undocumented Students

When the California Supreme Court refused to hear the University of California appeal in *Regents, U.C. v. Bradford* in April, it changed the rules under which undocumented students are admitted and charged for postsecondary education in the state. Relying upon an Alameda County Superior Court decision in *Letitia A.*, the colleges had previously permitted undocumented students who declared state residency to register as state residents, qualifying for the lower enrollment fees. But the *Bradford* decision mandates that undocumented students be charged out-of-state rates instead. Furthermore, Governor Wilson recently nullified the law that had allowed students

1992. This ruling could have a significant impact on the community colleges, the typical choice of undocumented students seeking a college education. More important, it comes at a time when the UC and CSU have declared that they do not have space to accommodate the marginally qualified students seeking admission, a situation that could force those students to seek out community college transfer programs instead. As a consequence, the community colleges, already confronting some serious over-enrollment programs of their own, are not likely to fight for the education rights of the 14,000 undocumented students already in the two-year system. Although those students are protected while they remain at the community college, they will now be prevented from transferring to a four-year institution to complete their undergraduate education because of their inability to pay the higher fees after transfer.

Basic Skills Limits

The matriculation issue, previously addressed in this column, simply refuses to go away. The bill introduced by Assembly Member Campbell and vetoed by Governor Deukmejian last year has been reintroduced as AB 493 (Campbell) this year. It would prohibit colleges from placing a student in specific classes on the basis of assessment test results, while also regulating the use of prerequisite and co-requisite courses, and would require establishment of faculty committees to examine college course sequences to determine necessity for basic skills courses in light of the number of such courses available. Faculty groups have expressed grave concern with the bill, arguing that it curtails their academic role in attempting to place students in courses where they have the greatest chance of success and in determining an appropriate sequence of courses to ensure student progress. The colleges, however, have a dearth of information about student success with reference to basic skills, and Assembly Member Campbell's legislation clearly reflects the concern of lawmakers that ethnic minority students can too easily become trapped in basic skills courses they sometimes do not need and frequently cannot escape to get to the college-level course sequences.

Transfer and Master Plan

Senator Gary Hart has reintroduced his transfer legislation as SB 121. Despite the fact that last year's version of this bill, SB 507, had the support of all the segments of higher education, Governor Deukmejian vetoed it on the grounds that funding for transfer centers and programs should be adequate to ensure the viability of the transfer process. The legislation pro-

Faculty Ratios

Attempts by Santa Monica College and the Foothill-DeAnza District to reassign administrators to the classroom and count their teaching as full-time, thereby generating additional funds under the AB 1725 full-time to part-time faculty ratio improvement, have resulted in AB 830 (Farr). The bill would require annual reports on progress in full-time faculty hiring, a change from the AB 1725 mandate that the system report just once, December 31, 1991. In addition, colleges could count as full-time teaching that portion of teaching done by administrators when AB 1725 was passed. The bill also provides that a portion of program improvement funds could be allocated for improvement in the number of full-time faculty.

Professor of the Year

Assembly Bill 1140 (Woodruff) would establish the Governor's Professor of the Year Award, to be presented annually to the best undergraduate college teacher in California, starting in 1992. The Governor and the California Postsecondary Education Commission would jointly form a selection committee including representatives from a wide segment of interests—the Governor, the legislature, CPEC, and civic, business, academic, and student organizations. That committee would also set the criteria and guidelines for this $5,000 award.

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who demonstrated California residency for more than a year to be charged the lower resident fees for both enrollment and financial aid purposes.

The *Bradford* ruling affects all segments of higher education. The UC has decided to comply immediately, while the CSU has requested clarification on the *Letitia A.* ruling in Alameda County, and the California Community Colleges have opted to comply with the registration of students in the spring of

an appropriate sequence of courses to ensure student progress. The colleges, however, have a dearth of information about student success with reference to basic skills, and Assembly Member Campbell's legislation clearly reflects the concern of lawmakers that ethnic minority students can too easily become trapped in basic skills courses they sometimes do not need and frequently cannot escape to get to the college-level course sequences.

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The comprehensive Master Plan legislation, introduced by Assembly Member Hayden in 1989 as AB 462 and vetoed by Governor Deukmejian, has been reintroduced as AB 617. The legislation is largely written as legislative intent and covers a wide range of issues, including educational mission, intersegmental coordination, commitment to provision of financial support, quality undergraduate education, employee diversity, student educational equity, admissions and transfer policies, and assessment.

Ability-to-Benefit

The ability-to-benefit provisions of the federal budget reauthorization act, and consequent protests from Chancellor Mertes concerning its adverse impact upon the California Community Colleges, have resulted in a legislative attempt to remedy the situation. AJR 17 (Hayden), for example, seeks to overturn federal regulations that students demonstrate ability to benefit, by attaining either a high school diploma or a successful score on a federally approved standardized test administered off-campus. Chancellor Mertes successfully fought the imposition of the new standards for students not seeking federal financial aid. This legislation would also exempt from the new provision students who do seek federal financial aid, currently amounting to about $271 million. Such provisions obviously conflict not only with California's commitment to free access to community college education, but also with the state matriculation provision that students be assessed on the basis of more than a standardized test score.

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inside english DEADLINES

Manuscripts received after the deadline for a given issue will be considered for the next appropriate issue.

DECEMBER 1991 issue

Teaching Literature at All Levels
15 October 1991

MARCH 1992 issue

Teaching Writing at All Levels
15 January 1992

MAY 1992 issue

The Challenge of Teaching English in the '90s
15 March 1992

TALKING BACK . . .

Yes! to No! Correcting with Cassettes

by LINDA RIDDELL
San Bernardino Valley College

I was happy to see Gloria Heller's article "'Red Tape,' or Correcting With Cassettes, (Part 2)," in the March 1991:3 issue of *inside english*.

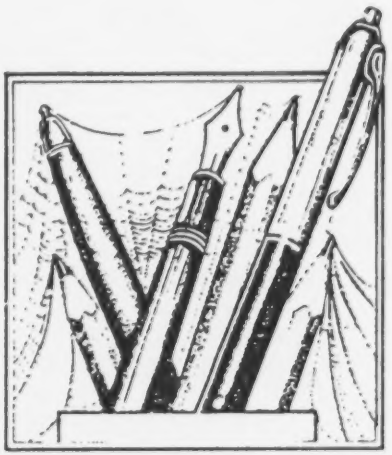
I have often wondered what percentage of college English teachers were experimenting with using audio-cassettes for feedback on student writing assignments. After many

long hours writing thorough "terminal" dialogue on students' papers, my mind often trickled off in search of a faster, more personal yet effective way of communicating with students about their writing progress. At some point in my teaching career, I came across the "cassette" theory and promised myself to try it. It seemed an exciting prospect, and I believed students would find its use novel enough to induce their greater involvement and enjoyment in writing.

I spent much time contemplating, periodically, ways in which I would incorporate the "cassette" theory into my teaching strategy. I knew I would simply require students to purchase an inexpensive cassette tape along with other required materials, and those tapes could be placed in an envelope stapled to their essays when turned in to me for review. I would place the cassette in the machine, punch the record button, lean far back in my "reading" chair, and begin talking to students about their papers in a casually conversational tone. That seemed easy enough: surely faster than writing out longhand detailed suggestions and examples; certainly more complete as I have a tendency to write incomplete sentences when commenting in writing to save time and space on paper. But, would it be more effective?

When I consider the importance of following student writing progress, I remember the comments I make on each student's essay drafts. These drafts have been through at least three workshops, shared with at least nine other "readers" in these workshops, and eventually make their way to me for suggestions and guidance before the essay is returned to the student for final draft development. When I evaluate the final drafts, I write nothing on students' papers until after I have reviewed my original comments and those comments made by their peers and have noted whatever progress they have made from one draft to another. This process is crucial: If students falter in a particular area of their essay, I can easily find the "trouble spot" by looking closely at the draft development and comments made early on. This "targeting" not only allows me to share with the student where progress is made but focuses the student on the particular area or areas that require attention. This focus, in turn, helps to alleviate much writing stress and anxiety for student writers—a must if I hope to motivate students to continue with the long, difficult process of writing composition.

If I were to use the cassette strategy, I would most likely be rewinding and fast-forwarding in search of comments related to particular areas of the essay that concern me. To update students with my final comments I would need to return to the end of the tape and refer students to particular areas on the tape or restate the comments I initially made. All in all, I depend too acutely on those written marginal and terminal notes to determine student progress, and the idea



of rewinding and fast-forwarding tapes in search of "target" spots (particular areas on a particular draft) would undermine my objective. Clearly, the cassette strategy would not accommodate my draft-by-draft progress objective for my composition students.

Reading about the limitations Heller experienced has only confirmed my suspicion that while the concept originally seemed enticingly faster, potentially more complete, and technologically more effective, ultimately, it appears to be simply more trouble than it is worth.

Linda Riddell has been working in the community college arena for approximately three years, at San Bernardino Valley College for approximately one and a half years. Her focus in the composition classroom is on collaborative workshops. Her concern is with feminism in composition, and she plans to submit manuscripts in the near future addressing this issue.

REDEFINING THE "AMERICAN" NOVEL

Isabel Allende and other Latin American Writers

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REDEFINING THE "AMERICAN" NOVEL

Isabel Allende and other Latin American Writers

by JACK JACKSON
City College of San Francisco and Diablo Valley College

Books contain themes. Themes can be elusive or stand out. Themes can escape us. Often a theme that catches our imagination on first reading has disappeared before we've finished reading the book; we wish we'd underlined something or made some notes. Often enough, the themes don't even appear to us before the second reading. Then we try to teach these themes, which may or may not elude *us*, to young students who are thinking about football, sex, money, television, and food. Hard work, at best.

We have such a need for good literature that we now go to the ends of the earth for it, unless it comes our way first. Reading the works of the Latin American "magical realists" can be a difficult and enlightening task. We read and encounter the stuff of imagination and wonder how on earth someone, anyone, could have thought all this up. Little or nothing in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* applies to modern life in the U.S. (so we think), and "our" only magical realist, Toni Morrison, is black and writes "only" about "the black experience" (so we think). As teachers, we feel it our duty to present a liberal arts education. Our task is to create, enhance, or renew thinking skills, and our main competition—television—is ever undermining that task. Now, while the debate rages over whether a "multicultural" education is tantamount to a "new fascism," we continue rowing upstream, backwards and blindfolded, to get to the elements of Gatsby and Huck, Tess and Oliver, or even, with bravado, Camus's Meursault. And often it doesn't work.

Recently, though, I read four startlingly good books, all by one author, all accessible, all "easy" reading, all available in paperback. Isabel Allende has just become a Bay Area local, too. Her books—*The House of Spirits, Of Love and Shadows, Eva Luna*, and *The Stories of Eva Luna*—abound in "magical realism" and in just plain old realism, too. Her books are about love, ghosts, war, spirit, guerillas, political repression, and all of the other themes we read about in the papers and see on TV, making them easily accessible to students,

even those who do not read. These are adventure stories about real people trapped in real events that cost them their lives or great portions of their lives or the lives of others.

South America, to me, is both mythology and history. Thanks to a wonderful, and wonderfully patient, sixth-grade teacher, I learned about Central and South America, specifically Peru. During that entire year we talked about, researched, and reported about the entire continent, from indigenous peoples to the invaders, from past to present, from rich to poor, from money to culture. In the seventh grade, however, we turned our backs on Mexico, Central, and South America and were not required to know another thing about any of these places. It wasn't until high school Spanish—an elective—that anybody showed any interest in Central or South America again. Going to high school in Berkeley in the sixties was learning about revolution in the streets anyway, so learning about culture as it was had to come later for me.

It came in 1975, in fact, when I was just back from Europe, where I'd made as much of a Euro-centric literary pilgrimage as I could in five months and returned to try to finish my Euro-centric master's thesis. I was waylaid along the way, though, by finding a copy of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a book that became a bible to me and sent me on a year-long search to unearth other Latin American writers.

I looked on bookshelves in new and used bookstores and in literary histories, and I asked people if they knew of any other writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Many people said no, and others hadn't even heard of Garcia Marquez, but I also found that when I pulled out my tattered copy of *Solitude* in a cafe, people would comment on it and maybe, just maybe, have a thread to another author. In this slow and painstaking way I amassed a list of authors that in fifteen years I have not yet been able to plow through. It's called the Latin American "explosion" or "boom" (which will do, I guess, but seems

(ALLENDE, Continued on Page 12)

ISABEL ALLENDE

(Continued from Page 11)

slightly condescending, as if these authors somehow just now rose up to our standards), and sure enough, these novels explode.

From the smoky pages of Miguel Angel Asturias (Nobel Prize, 1967) to the subtle hilarity of Jorge Borges (denied a Nobel Prize year after year) to the romance and revolutions of Pablo Neruda (Nobel Prize, 1971) to the jungles and revolutions of Garcia Marquez (Nobel Prize, 1982) to the sweet and worldly verses of Gabriella Mistral (Nobel Prize, 1945) and, finally, to the novels of Isabel Allende. I say finally because I want to get to the point. Here we have an abundance of literature—fresh, clean, demanding, full of themes, full of mythology, full of ideas without being sterile "novels of ideas."

Now, how can we use them? We, especially we in California, have a constant influx of new citizens, many of them from south of our national borders. Many of them become community college students; many of them don't. Regardless of their student status, they are members of our community. Many of our students, especially in suburban areas, are white. These are the students we have to reach with our multicultural ideas and agenda (in *Newsweek*'s article on "politically correct" language there is a quotation from a California student questioning the need for multicultural education); the "others"—Asians, Hispanics, African Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders—are already "multicultural." They already see the deadness (for themselves, at least) of Euro-centric themes. What they see in all-white Gatsby and in all-white Tess is just that—all white. Hardy's descriptions of peasant life in England may be interesting to us, but what do they seem like to a teenage refugee from El Salvador? Many peasant immigrants from Central and South America are fleeing war and repression, dispossession and death; how do our indigenous students perceive *them*?

How do we define and how do we understand the issue of "multicultural" education? Are we to think of it as integrating minority cultures into the mainstream (is this the Republican view?) or as integrating the mainstream culture into the new? Are we a melting pot, or not? When we read concurrent history of North and South America, we read how the puzzling string of fascist dictatorships rose and rose, mostly in the name of democracy, falling only to other fascist dictatorships, while we in our land are blessed with "real democracy." We see lives in abject poverty. (In *Eva Luna*, Allende refers to the new middle class sections of town as being immediately surrounded by *barrios* of slums built out of the leftover building supplies of the middle class homes.) The rich and powerful families of European immigrants are able to do what they want, economically, because they have the support of the government, while *los pobres* (the poor) live "like that" because they're bad people, an attitude not far from a typical college student's of the American middle class.

The manipulations and machinations of the Pinochet coup in its overthrow of the democratically elected goverment of Salvador Allende are written about, actually woven into the

Our assumption of "justice" is almost novel in these novels. Justice to a peasant (the "peasant" theme is of interest also; why don't we have peasants in the U.S.?) is the back of the *patron*'s hand; justice in the cities is the justice of the military or of the death squad. "That can't happen here!" the students cry, but then we can roll the history films back to the "justice" of Medgar Evers and the "justice" at Kent State.

These books are "flow" books. The sentences flow like rivers and mountains and high skies; the voices of the people soothe each other and us. Even so, the stories are not comfortable. Bodies are piled up in a cave in *Of Love and Shadows*. When the discoverers are in turn discovered, one of them is shot, anonymously, in the dead of night, her survival nothing short of "miraculous" or magical. People are beaten for stealing; girls are raped at the whim of a *patron* or his son; people's ideas are squashed if they don't conform to "democracy," which is loosely defined as "What the *patron* says is right!"

A good place to start our multicultural learning experience is right in our own back yard, literally. Such novels are "High interest," thematic, suspenseful, sexy, informative, provocative, and different. Use them. They're out there, sitting on shelves everywhere, waiting to be discovered by generations of college students and instructors.

Jack Jackson has been teaching for the past three years at City College of San Francisco, College of Alameda, and Diablo Valley College. Before becoming a college English instructor, he taught special education for seven years in a variety of settings, mostly in Richmond and Berkeley. He has also organized a reading and and discussion group for readers of Latin American novels and poetry through La Pena Cultural Center in Berkeley.

IRIDESCENT PERSPECTIVE

1

Diving from the canoe, her head wrapped,
dropping from the surface
sinking to silent bottom harvest,
greedy,
she scoops up the oysters.

2

"Raw oysters, seasoned with salt pepper lemon ketchup
(or other sauce) are an excellent appetizer."

3

all white. Hardy's descriptions of peasant life in England may be interesting to us, but what do they seem like to a teenage refugee from El Salvador? Many peasant immigrants from Central and South America are fleeing war and repression, dispossession and death; how do our indigenous students perceive *them*?

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In *The House of the Spirits* Allende weaves the theme of dictatorship carefully into the thread of the narrative. Each character is victimized, directly or indirectly, as the juggernaut of repression sweeps the country. Families are divided by loyalty—to each other, of course, but also to or against the military government. When the government announces that people are either "for us or against us," the wealthier classes agree: we are with you. "Revolutionaries" from some of these families clandestinely act against the government, then come home to TV news reports that speak only of traffic accidents, bumper crops, actresses' successes and defeats, never of *los desaparecidos* (the disappeared), never of the clandestine actions, and never of the crushing poverty. Yet the rich and the middle class alike are victims, through propaganda and (chosen) ignorance, wanting only to believe "what is right," not necessarily what is true.

The House of the Spirits treats us to a multigenerational family epic of sorts, which touches on all the themes of South America through one un-named country. The seemingly limitless peaks of the Andean *cordillera* rise above modern European-styled cities, where descendants of the Incas come to town to ply their wares and where a large portion of the population

thread of the novel, without our having to think about politics. *Los gringos* are responsible, of course, but are rarely mentioned (Garcia Marquez does a ravishing send-up of the American "banana republic" in *Solitude*, while Asturias is not so polite in his works); the real culprits are the men in power. The men in power are the generals, and what they want is just that—power. They want the power to control the country's destiny, its morals, its poor, its education. If it takes repression, then that's what it takes. If it takes killing thousands of people to suppress what we in the United States consider the basic rights of free speech and freedom of the press, then so be it. The "economic boycott" of the Allende years is effectively retold: how the shelves were emptied with his democratic election, then refilled when the general took over; the lack was blamed on Allende and his "socialism," while the goods were actually being withheld by people trying to destabilize the government.

The theme of immigration is also a natural: How many people do our students know or see who fit the description of "refugee"? How are these refugees treated? Who are they? Why do they come here? The Chile of Isabel Allende is a frightening place. The Argentina of the Generals and the Perons is a frightening place. The Peru of the *Sendero Luminoso* is a frightening place. The Brazil of *Pixote* (the movie) is a frightening place. People who are able to flee these places want to come to a place where there is work without fear. There is still fear for them here, but not the fear of the death squad or the anti-union "labor leaders." And these frightening places are our backyard. Remember *Dr. Zhivago*: "I just want to live." And he was not a peasant!

IRIDESCENT PERSPECTIVE

1

Diving from the canoe, her head wrapped,
dropping from the surface
sinking to silent bottom harvest,
greedy,
she scoops up the oysters.

2

"Raw oysters, seasoned with salt pepper lemon ketchup
(or other sauce) are an excellent appetizer."

3

Hair still dripping, this Aphrodite
avid now
pockets a few oysters to slip to her tired lover.

4

Murky bi-valve.
An arrogant innocence makes you exude
limey walls for shelter;
rigid and ridged, shingle-shelled,
you, oyster, think the world is thine!

5

So ya wanna clam up, huh?
Whadderya hiding?
Jools?

6

An oyster weeps a pearl
to ease the hurt
by rounding and smoothing
and then astonished,
smiles at the shine.
Love, too, is spun from awful need
like fine invading sand
which rubs against the soul
to make that lustrous seed.

JUDITH KLINGER ROSE
Los Angeles Trade-Tech College

Judith Klinger Rose has been writing poetry at a furious pace during her recent sabbatical.

A MULTICULTURAL FRESHMAN COMP

Strategies for Infusing Cultural Diversity

by MILLIE M. KIDD
Mount St. Mary's College

Last year Mount St. Mary's College instituted a year-long workshop on infusing a multicultural perspective across the curriculum. For me, the workshop not only provided an opportunity to exchange ideas and insights with other faculty and to gain specific information about texts and theories, it also confirmed my own notions about the need for greater flexibility in the selection of course materials and assignments for Freshman English and validated my efforts to find alternative ways of teaching and assessing students from diverse cultural, socio-economic, and academic backgrounds.

I began teaching at Mount St. Mary's five years ago. Having moved here from the relatively homogeneous environment of the Midwest, I was immediately struck by the diversity of Los Angeles, for which Mt. St. Mary's is a sort of microcosm. That diversity was both exciting and challenging, for it didn't take me long to realize that many of my students were less than enthusiastic about the traditional literary works I had chosen and were not responding to my usual manner of presentation. I knew I had to make some significant changes in my syllabus, in my teaching techniques, and in my methods of assessment. Here are some of the things I did.

CHANGES IN THE CLASSROOM

To enliven classroom discussions, I asked students to place their chairs in a circle. Facing one another made it easier to carry on a dialogue and for students to respond to and argue with one another rather than simply direct all responses to the instructor or speak to each other through me. I later learned in

to guess what I wanted them to say, they were eager to voice their views.

When in the course of these discussions, I sometimes used personal examples, illustrations, or vignettes to make a point. Occasionally, however, I noticed that some students still looked confused or disinterested. At such times I would ask the class to volunteer examples from their own experiences. Their comments frequently succeeded in drawing in many of those who had otherwise tuned out. The workshop affirmed my method here, for it revealed that no learning takes place when students cannot relate to the examples and illustrations. By encouraging students to recount episodes from their own lives, I had unwittingly made use of culturally-relevant examples.

Early in the semester I engaged students in specific discussions about the cultural diversity of American society and about the importance of preserving and extending that diversity rather than seeking to melt away or to hide the differences. Frankly, I was surprised to find that most of them had never thought about their own culture and had little or no understanding of how it relates to the general makeup of our nation or to their own identity.

To increase their cultural awareness and to help them make a connection between their cultural heritage and their sense of self, we used primarily literature by ethnic-American writers. I explained to my students that since most of the works were as new to me as they were to them, they were not to look to me as the "expert" with all the answers. Instead, we would have to share the responsibility and the adventure of coming to terms with each of the readings. As soon as I made this revelation, I began to worry about the effect it would have: Would discussions get

had a better understanding of *Romeo and Juliet* after viewing it in conjunction with *West Side Story*. Yet another student who had never enjoyed poetry before because she felt she could not understand it became so involved in the imagery and language in Lorna Dee Cervantes' poem "Freeway 280" that her enthusiasm influenced her roommate to

use it for a report in another class taught by a different instructor.

All of the writing assignments for the class grew out of the readings. For instance, after we read and discussed Maxine H. Kingston's "No Name Woman," I asked each student to go through old family photographs and select one of a relative about whom she knew very little, then to construct a story in which she would imagine what that person's life had been like, and to speculate on how her own life had been influenced by that individual. Several students expressed their gratitude for having been given the opportunity to explore these topics and to learn about their cultural and personal heritage. Even one of my Anglo students, who felt she could not define her roots as clearly as the Hispanic and Asian students and believed her family to be "boring," was filled with a new sense of pride when she learned that her Canadian grand-

As I moved among the groups, I noticed that students who frequently were detached during open discussions were now actively engaged with their peers, asking questions, volunteering their own ideas, and generally assuming more responsibility for their own learning. Following one such collaborative-learning session, a young black woman who had been consistently silent to the point of sullenness came to me to ask if she could do an unassigned report on Paule Marshall.

CHANGES IN METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

For me the class was exhilarating. It had proved easier than I had anticipated to relinquish some degree of control over class discussions, to modify my syllabus to reflect cultural diversity, to alter my method of instruction, and to create assignments that would challenge students to examine their own values, feelings, and beliefs. Nevertheless, I was plagued by a sense of uneasiness, which I could not clearly define. We were, after all, using fine works of literature (albeit not from the traditional canon) not only as a means of inquiry into the nature of prejudice and discrimination, but also as expressions of individual perspective and universal needs and desires as well. Students were doing the work with very little resistance, most were expressing enthusiasm for the assignments, and their work was well organized and well supported.

Despite these successes, I worried about how to assess what students were learning. How would I know if they were getting what they needed? The discussion sparked by Dr. Geneva Gay's presentation at our final IMPAC workshop helped me to identify the source of the tension I was feeling as a reluctance to deviate from the traditional methods of evaluating students' progress and achievement. Dr. Gay mentioned that traditional education

less than enthusiastic about the traditional literary works I had chosen and were not responding to my usual manner of presentation. I knew I had to make some significant changes in my syllabus, in my teaching techniques, and in my methods of assessment. Here are some of the things I did.

CHANGES IN THE CLASSROOM

To enliven classroom discussions, I asked students to place their chairs in a circle. Facing one another made it easier to carry on a dialogue and for students to respond to and argue with one another rather than simply direct all responses to the instructor or speak to each other through me. I later learned in the workshop that this kind of alternative seating plan changes the way students perceive the learning environment. The straight-line arrangement places the instructor in an authoritarian position, whereas the circle eliminates that focus and promotes a sense of collaboration and cooperative effort.

I generally invited students to begin the day's discussion with a question or an observation that had occurred to them during the course of their reading. In doing this, I was, to a large degree, relinquishing control over

the direction the discussion would take, but more importantly, I was allowing students to assume the initiative for their own learning and to pursue aspects of the works that interested them. Freed from the anxiety of trying about their own culture and had little or no understanding of how it relates to the general makeup of our nation or to their own identity.

To increase their cultural awareness and to help them make a connection between their cultural heritage and their sense of self, we used primarily literature by ethnic-American writers. I explained to my students that since most of the works were as new to me as they were to them, they were not to look to me as the "expert" with all the answers. Instead, we would have to share the responsibility and the adventure of coming to terms with each of the readings. As soon as I made this revelation, I began to worry about the effect it would have: Would discussions get out of hand, go off on tangents? Would students resent this open-ended approach and the accompanying ambiguity? Would they insist on the validity of half-baked ideas, using the argument that one person's opinion is as good as another's?

What happened, in fact, was that students felt "safe" to raise questions that had occurred to them in the course of their reading; and their classmates, empowered by the new sense of freedom, were eager to offer their ideas. Sometimes they employed experiential examples, thus making an important connection between life and literature. Additionally, these comments often served to illustrate how frame of reference can shape interpretation.

Perhaps because of the multicultural framework of the course, students felt comfortable with the interpretative ambiguity and began to value it as highly appropriate and even desirable. At the beginning of the course I had explained that my purpose in constructing an eclectic syllabus had not been to replace traditional "classics," but to offer a new perspective through which to appreciate them. One student was prompted to read Greek mythology after our discussion of cultural myths in Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*. Another student, deeply moved by *West Side Story*, felt she had learned to appreciate others based on individual worth regardless of race or cultural background. Others felt they "No Name Woman," I asked each student to go through old family photographs and select one of a relative about whom she knew very little, then to construct a story in which she would imagine what that person's life had been like, and to speculate on how her own life had been influenced by that individual. Several students expressed their gratitude for having been given the opportunity to explore these topics and to learn about their cultural and personal heritage. Even one of my Anglo students, who felt she could not define her roots as clearly as the Hispanic and Asian students and believed her family to be "boring," was filled with a new sense of pride when she learned that her Canadian grandmother had spoken French and had cooked French cuisine.

I asked my students to construct a family tree and then to describe ways in which they are like a particular person on that tree. They had a marvelous time with this assignment, engaging grandparents, aunts, and uncles in ways they had never dreamed they could. They uncovered such family secrets as a grandfather who had been a priest, a great-grandmother who had had an affair with Pancho Villa, and an uncle who had been a political tyrant in Mexico. One young Hispanic was thrilled to discover that she had probably inherited her love and talent for the violin from her great-grandfather, a professional violinist whom she had not known about before. Students were eager to share these cross-cultural experiences either with the class or in small groups.

Cooperative learning and peer-editing groups brought together students from diverse backgrounds to work on a specific task. For our discussion of Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*, for instance, students selected topics for group presentations and became the "experts" on that particular aspect of the novel. Not only did this cross-cultural experience prepare them for similar experiences outside the classroom, but it provided an alternative learning situation for those students who work better cooperatively.

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tends to be largely cognitive, whereas multicultural education is both cognitive *and* affective. Traditional classes aim primarily to impart knowledge, to increase the students' fund of facts and information, while the multicultural approach seeks to change attitudes and modify behavior, as well as to diffuse knowledge.

Traditional tests are designed to measure the extent to which a student has learned what is taught in the class, using primarily written demonstration of achievement. Dr. Gay pointed out that while the expectations are reasonable, these methods of testing are unfair to many ethnic minority groups such as Black

(STRATEGIES, Continued on Page 14)

News From the Regions

Please send the editor information about you and your colleagues: grants received; presentations given; books, articles, and poems published; projects undertaken; and anything else that pertains to your professional activities. Be sure all submissions are typed, double-spaced, and include the person's full name and college and all pertinent information, including dates and places.

REGION X: SAN DIEGO

Directors: MURIEL DAVIS, *San Diego Mesa College*; NANCY NADEAU, *Imperial Valley College*.

Eighteen instructors from Region X attended a Roundtable at the region's annual mini-conference, hosted by Mira Costa College.

GLORIA WEINTRAUB (Mira Costa College) reported on a composition restructuring begun last summer by a committee of instructors who used a Programs Innovation Grant (in-house) to do research, visit other campuses, and redesign their pre-Freshman Composition course sequence. Still in the planning stages, the changes include reducing class size from thirty-five to twenty-five, awarding credit/no credit rather than letter grades, and reducing the units from five to four.

A crucial feature is the option given students to take the pre-basic English class up to three times without any grade penalty. A one-half to one-unit writing lab course will enhance this option by allowing instructors and tutors to work closely with the students with a minimum of student isolation in commercial materials and software.

Further advantages include heterogeneity at the pre-basic level, allowing for optimum use of collaborative learning; a pre-Freshman Composition class in which students are fully prepared; and a "credit" grade for students who have worked hard but still need further instruction.

MARY DONNELLY (Grossmont College) discussed "Project Success," in which several dedicated teachers and counselors have worked diligently to develop a program designed to motivate and retain "at-risk" students—those scoring in the bottom quartile on entrance tests or self-reporting a high school GPA of 2.2 or less.

The core program consists of a developmental English class (pre-Freshman Comp), math (at various levels), a developmental reading class, and, more recently, a personal development and studies skills course offered by the Counseling Department. Instructors of these courses coordinate some skill activities (vocabulary, reading assignments, critical thinking problems), particularly as these relate to English and reading classes, but all instructors meet on a regular basis to monitor student progress and promulgate new ideas.

Counselors not only encourage students to work together with their instructors and study with friends attending shared classes, but also instruct these students in study-skill strategies. Teachers have noted that students respond more willingly in class. They are not so fearful of asking questions or admitting skill weaknesses. They "feel" comfortable in their environment. While first semester students often report feeling "lost" on Grossmont's 18,000-student campus, Project Success students enjoy a community of friends and seem eager to select classes for a second semester.

Eight years of persistence have accrued some impressive "success" statistics:

	Students in Project Success	Similar students not in project
1st SEMESTER UNITS COMPLETED	9.2	4.4
1st SEMESTER GPA (with 2.3 average for transfer students)	2.52	1.6
DROP-OUT % (received "W")	11%	34%
RETURNED FOR SECOND SEMESTER	85%	59%

For additional information contact MARY DONNELLY or SUE JENSON (English), DONNA DOYLE (Math), or MARY RIDER (Counseling) at (619) 467-1700.

A multi-ethnic English-Humanities core program (World Cultures) is now in its third semester at San Diego City College: the cultures of the Americas, Africa, and China are included, along with the traditional Western humanities. DOROTHY BERGER, who teaches English and Chinese literature at San Diego Mesa College, reported on this transfer-level program that she and CANDY WALTZ (a history instructor at San Diego City) have created to coordinate freshman and intermediate composition with humanities.

The humanities segment includes units on the cultures of the Americas (TERNOT MACRENATO, Chicano Studies), Africa (NATHAN KATUNGI, Black Studies), and China (DOROTHY BERGER). The "World Cultures" theme is much in keeping with the multi-ethnic focus encouraged by President JEANNE ATHERTON for San Diego City's racially and culturally mixed student body.

The program has been awarded an honorable mention by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges.

A survey compiled by the participants revealed that most instructors would like to meet twice rather than once a year. The directors promise to schedule meetings accordingly.

NOTICES

(Continued from Page 2)

nities with which we, our students, and our

to the teaching of English. The journal is especially interested in reviews of novels, short story collections, and volumes of poetry (current or past) that have nourished you as an

Papers in English. The *Concept Papers* series provides an outlet for works that are too long for consideration as articles, but too short for publication as monographs or books. The

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NOTICES

(Continued from Page 2)

nities with which we, our students, and our colleagues identify; and to the constraints that create positive and negative tensions in our professional lives."

More complete information will apppear in the December 1991 issue.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS AND PROPOSALS

FUTURE ISSUES OF *i.e.*

inside english is planning future issues that will focus on the following topics:

- Cultural/Ethnic/Gender/Age Diversity in the Writing Classroom
- Reflecting Cultural/Ethnic/Gender/Age Diversity in Planning a Literature Curriculum
- Teaching to the Many While Not Neglecting the Few
- Strategies for Revitalizing the Writing Instructor
- Strategies for Revitalizing the Literature Instructor
- Literary Theory in Literature Classes
- Reconsidering the Classics
- Old Ideas or New: Teaching Writing in the '90s

All English instructors are invited to submit manuscripts on these and other topics of concern to our profession. In addition, *i.e.* invites reviews of writing and literature texts and books of pedagogy and philosophy pertinent to the teaching of English. The journal is especially interested in reviews of novels, short story collections, and volumes of poetry (current or past) that have nourished you as an instructor and lover of language and literature.

Please follow the format briefly described on page 2 of each issue of *i.e.* For a more detailed description of the guidelines for submission, please write the editor for an "*inside english* Style Sheet."

CALL FOR CONCEPT PAPERS

NCTE is interested in reviewing a limited number of papers for a new series, *Concept Papers in English*. The *Concept Papers* series provides an outlet for works that are too long for consideration as articles, but too short for publication as monographs or books. The series intends to present leading-edge thinking and will emphasize theoretical, exploratory essays in English literacy education at all teaching levels. Essays addressing such issues as reconceptualizing literacy, restructuring curriculum, and assessment theory are especially welcome. Please submit papers of thirty-five to fifty pages in length, double-spaced, to Publications, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

STRATEGIES

(Continued from Page 13)

Americans, whose cultural socialization emphasizes oral and participatory learning, and for Native Americans, who are accustomed to imitative learning in their culture. On the other hand, assessment of student achievement in a multicultural learning environment places as much value on the learning process that takes place in the classroom as it does on the end product. That classroom process includes such hard-to-measure factors as the ability to cooperate with others, to make decisions, to take part in discussions, to give oral presentations, and to think critically and independently.

In my Freshman English classes I had been measuring student achievement through a variety of methods including peer- and self-evaluation, group evaluation, and written exams and essays. My sense of uneasiness arose, I believe, as a result of my employing such unconventional methods. I had somehow come to feel that I was "cheating" or betraying the system, even though I was careful to maintain high standards and to enforce requirements established at the outset of the term.

The workshop and Dr. Gay's comments helped me to see that my methods of evaluation are fully appropriate to the multicultural approach because they allow for a wider range of cultural experiences and learning styles. Those of us who are products of a mainstream educational system have learned to place a high value on verbal and written demonstrations of achievement. Now we must learn that these kinds of tests measure only cognitive learning and accurately measure

even that only in those individuals who are culturally at ease with this style of testing. Assessing affective progress is more challenging but equally as important as measuring content. Until we can change attitudes toward assessment and learn to appreciate and value other forms of testing in addition to verbal and written work, we will not have totally reformed our curriculum to meet the needs and experiences of the full range of ethnic groups in this country.

Dr. Millie Kidd has been teaching at Mount St. Mary's College for over five years. She teaches in both the AA and BA programs at the college. The courses described above are part of the two-year program at Mt. St. Mary's Doheny Campus.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A FORTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD STUDENT TURNS IN A PLAGIARIZED ESSAY

I knew all along she thought I was a patsy,
the entire semester cornering me in the office with careening
monologues to explain absences, pumped-up narratives
to justify plummeting quiz scores. Yes, especially,
after she'd confessed her drinking, A.A. membership,
a chronic life of accidents, I'm sure she thought she had me.

She couldn't have known that lies and cop-outs were
what I've been primed to uncover, not in my job—
but in my personal life—an awkward phrase,
I know, because students rarely think their teachers
have one of those, despite wedding rings, overexposed
photos in plastic cubes on the desk. They believe
their instructors are wound up in the morning, peter out
during the day, and at 3:00 go into storage.

What could have told her she was no match?
Not my 22 years of teaching. Even in this late
spring semester, every student is new.
Unlike any other. I want them all to succeed.
That's what she saw. All she saw.

I'll never forget how her smug face collapsed
into some shape of the truth. "F for the course."
When she asked me to repeat myself as if she'd permit me
to remedy a faux pas, I said it again.
It was easy—like being held up by a flustered robber
whose gun I'd just grabbed.

How do you teach someone she can't always
do it over? That once is all she gets?
When she said she was an honest person,
I told her she was delusional. And there we were—
two middle-aged women—exposed, as if an electric bulb
suspended
from the ceiling washed us in ugly glare,
both raw, she with humiliation and I with wrath.

After she left, I sat there with my implacable
heart, that one-way street and its dead end.
I didn't care what others might call it—
strength, standards, even something so affirming
as *ethics*, because I know that winning or losing
is only a matter of perspective, that it's possible
to be right and wrong at the same time, to feel
love and hate simultaneously—
and remembered when I told my husband
he'd have to leave, that I'd already packed him
out of the house, saying, "I can't stand a cheater."
He backed out the front door, sat in his car
folded over the steering wheel, staring at the house,
while I leaned into the kitchen window,
and just like now, clenched my fists and wept.

LAURIE DUESING
Solano Community College

Laurie Duesing has been teaching composition, literature, and creative writing since 1968. She recently received an NEA grant in poetry.

YOM KIPPUR, SHABAT
(for PM)

A chorus of scolding aunts
rises out of the dark matter.
I call for rescue.
"I can't stop working on this book!"
You arrive at my door brimming with questions,
make sure my canteen is full.
"Did you go to temple? Fast?
How much do you really remember?"

We drive to Point Dume, walk along the ridge.
"'Fragile Area?' is that the sign?
Is this where you left the path?"
Condoms, old socks, decorate the brush,
We turn our backs, stare down into rolling waters.
"Are those the rocks?
A seal? Sea otters?
Is this where you had the vision?"
I want a portrait of you photographing me.

I give you this sketch:
A child in a blue tweed coat, matching hat,
waits with her father outside a shul.
Her Zada remains to lullabye the dead

in a clay jar on her head as she
journeys up-river into blue-eyed country.
She will stumble, the jar will break.
No one will believe the spillage is hers.

You have just returned from Baywood Park,
detailed morning feed display of sandpiper, heron;
skimmed over the beloved wrestling his dreams.
We descend the staircase, walk south along the shore,
debate the names of sea-birds.
A nude surfer emerges,
board in front of him, buttocks exposed.
The tide comes in fast,
wets the bottoms of our jeans.
"I don't want to talk about it," you cry.
We ignore roaring helicopter, gang graffiti,
boy beating his sorrows
on the cliffs above the worshippers;
giggle at the surfer's sheepish smile.

The secret, the old squabble
becomes this bread and cheese we share,
pear-apple and oatmeal cookies.
Ghosts gather along the reef.
We greet them and feast.

NANCY SHIFFRIN

[illegible] just grabbed.

How do you teach someone she can't always
do it over? That once is all she gets?
When she said she was an honest person,
I told her she was delusional. And there we were—
two middle-aged women—exposed, as if an electric bulb
suspended
from the ceiling washed us in ugly glare,
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We turn our backs, stare down into rolling waters.
"Are those the rocks?
A seal? Sea otters?
Is this where you had the vision?"
I want a portrait of you photographing me.

I give you this sketch:
A child in a blue tweed coat, matching hat,
waits with her father outside a shul.
Her Zada remains to lullabye the dead.
The child wants shelter from slant autumn heat—
to be inside the mystery—taste the singing.
The day before, she'd shopped with her mother
at the open-air markets. She will wear
the aroma of fish on ice, pickles in barrels.
She will carry the music of women haggling

A nude surfer emerges,
board in front of him, buttocks exposed.
The tide comes in fast,
wets the bottoms of our jeans.
"I don't want to talk about it," you cry.
We ignore roaring helicopter, gang graffiti,
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giggle at the surfer's sheepish smile.

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We greet them and feast.

NANCY SHIFFRIN
Los Angeles City College

Nancy Shiffrin has written two collections of poetry, What She Could Not Name *(La Jolla Poets' Press, 1987) and* Point Dume. *Ms. Shiffrin's non-fiction writings appear in the* Los Angeles Times, New York Magazine, *and other publications. She has taught part-time at Los Angeles City College and has taught private writing workshops, and now has a one-year position at St. John's Seminary.*

CHICANO LITERATURE

(Continued from Page 3)

Hill Press, 1985. ISBN 0-89407-064-9. Paperback.

This is much like Chavez's book, using very short vignettes to touch on the same themes. Soto addresses other themes, such as career development, learning Spanish, marriage out of the culture, death.

READERS

[Editor's Note: See REviews in this issue for detailed reviews of these readers.]

Knepler, Henry and Myrna Knepler. *Crossing Cultures: Readings for Composition*, 3rd ed. Macmillan, 1991. ISBN 0-02-365231-4.

This is one of the better anthologies. It is not divided into ethnic sections but into nine thematic sections, with a cross-section of writers addressing the theme of that section: Growing Up, Families, Identities, etc. The selections are also cross-referenced by the traditional rhetorical modes.

* *

Rico, Barbara Roche and Sandra Mano. *American Mosaic: Multicultural Readings in Context.* Houghton Mifflin, 1991. ISBN 0-395-53690-1. Paperback.

The text's nine chapters present essays, fiction, and poetry by writers from the various minorities in the United States: Chinese, Black, Puerto Rican, Japanese, Chicano, and Native American. The first chapter has writings by immigrants from Italy, Poland, Scandinavia, Syria, and Ireland. The last chapter includes writings by Americans descended from Jews, Cubans, Vietnamese, South Africans, and Filipinos, as well as those previously noted.

* *

Verburg, Carol J. *Ourselves Among Others: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers.* Bedford Books/St. Martin's Press, 1991. ISBN 0-312-03468-7. Paperback.

This text is divided into seven themes: The West and the World, The Family, Coming of Age, Women and Men, Ideology and Politics, and Witnesses to War. The authors represent countries throughout the world and various American minorities.

PUBLISHERS THAT OFFER HISPANIC-AMERICAN TITLES

ARTE PUBLICO PRESS. University of Houston, Houston, TX 77204-2090. (713) 749-4768.

BILINGUAL REVIEW/PRESS. Hispanic Research Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 95287-2702. (602) 965-3867.

FLORICANTO PRESS. 16161 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 830, Encino, CA 91436-2504. (818) 990-1885.

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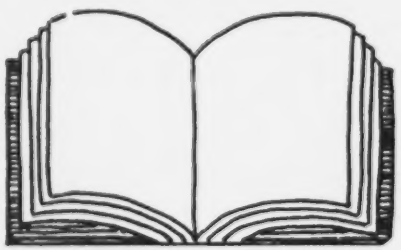
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO PRESS. Journalism Building, Suite 220, Albuquerque, NM 87131. (505) 277-7564.



UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME PRESS, LATINO AND LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES. Notre Dame, IN 46556.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS, LATIN AMERICAN/MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES. P.O. Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713-7819. (800) 252-3206.

REVIEWS

(Continued from Page 7)

that diversity is being celebrated by editors in lock-step waving banners emblazoned, "Innovative Cross-Cultural Approach." Witness the titles and sub-titles of the half dozen texts I have chosen for this review: *Across Cultures; Crossing Cultures; Emerging Voices: A Cross-Cultural Reader; Intercultural Journeys through Reading and Writing; Ourselves Among Others: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers; Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. Nevertheless, the obvious commercial ploy did not deter me from examining the texts piling up on my desk. In fact, I wanted to learn what these new "cross-cultural" readers have to offer my students and me.

A sometimes neglected starting point is the cover. Despite the numbing similarity of the key words in these titles, the colors and graphics vary greatly. Here I give highest marks to *Intercultural Journeys* with its beautifully balanced lettering and photo of boat, sea, and sky (credited to the book's editor, Marilyn Smith Layton). *Ourselves Among Others* runs a close second: the solid fuchsia background is an attention-grabber, and the Jacob Lawrence painting reminds me of intergalactic council meetings on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. The other covers, in contrast, too clearly indicate that I am about to open a textbook, with *Emerging Voices* a definite last choice. Albeit this is superficial criticism, covers sell books and attract readers, students and teachers alike.

Once past the packaging, I immediately noticed similarities in the way contents are grouped in *Across Cultures, Crossing Cultures*, and *Emerging Voices*. Subheadings are short, often one or two words: "Education," "Relationships," "Growing Up," "Customs," "Aspirations," etc. The brevity is appealing but occasionally too cryptic ("Reflections"? "Places"?). However, *Intercultural Journeys* leans too far in the other direction, producing

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America provides stimulating material—mostly nonfiction with an occasional story or poem—to help students analyze their backgrounds, understand their place in American society, and perhaps even define or redefine their future. *Ourselves Among Others* chooses a wider venue in chapters on "The West and the World," "Ideology and Politics," and "Witnesses to War," whose selections "[give] readers in this country information to use in writing about the larger world" (iii).

All six books contain appealing readings. However, paging through, I noted a number of duplications: "Barba Nikos," "My Papa's Waltz," "Los Vendidos," "Arrival at Manzanar," to name just a few. I also noted the repetition of familiar names: Toni Cade Bambara, Richard Rodriguez, Maxine Hong Kingston, Ishmael Reed, Richard Wright, Margaret Atwood, Black Elk, Vine Deloria, Malcolm X, Gloria Naylor, Maya Angelou, Jamaica Kincaid, Chinua Achebe. Decidedly, the editors have expended considerable effort to avoid Old Dead White Men, thus missing thematically compatible essays and stories by Ernest Hemingway, Aldous Huxley, D.H. Lawrence, Christopher Isherwood, Lawrence Durrell, and others worth including in a class intended to introduce freshmen not only to college-level writing but also to college-level cultural literacy. I like the variety and the generally high quality of selections in *Across Cultures, Intercultural Journeys*, and *Ourselves Among Others*, with the last being my top choice for its generous inclusion of "authors . . . of both literary and political importance" (iii), including Nadine Gordimer, Nelson Mandela, Simone de Beauvoir, Bruno Bettelheim, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, among others. *Rereading America* is another strong contender in the area of content, but I prefer to teach more short fiction than the text includes.

The selections themselves are important, but so also are the ancillary questions, comments, and suggestions intended to turn read-

often quiet good; e.g. "Before you read 'Scoshi,' write about a time in your life when a friendship with someone started out well but then seemed to disintegrate" (11). Equally often, however, these assignments would work as well or better after a quick read through the text. In any case, once again this is good journal material. *Ourselves Among Others* follows

each selection with "Explorations" (reading questions), "Connections" (between works), and "Elaborations" (writing assignments of varying difficulty). A feature labeled "Looking at Ourselves," consisting of shorter excerpts—sometimes only a paragraph, sometimes a page or more more—precedes seven out of eight units and offers observations on each subject by U.S. writers.

Concluding my examination, I decided to climb aboard the cross-cultural express in the coming semester. My text will be *Ourselves Among Others* because of the variety and depth of its readings, the authors it includes, the provocative issues it raises, the opportunities for journal writing in "Looking at Ourselves," and because of the way I can integrate its material with the other texts I am using in freshman composition: *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing* (3rd edition), *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan, and *American*

major authors, literary and social movements, ethnic groups, social reforms. Equally, we will do them a disservice by collecting material that is out of date, less than exceptional in quality, unduly polemical, false or exaggerated in its accusations.

—Perhaps one day all freshman composition readers will be truly "cross-cultural" without having to exaggerate, apologize, or call attention to the uniqueness of their diversity. Until that time, these six collections are worth looking into. Students and teachers alike will learn from all of them.

☐ Colombo, Gary, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle, eds. *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. New York: St. Martin's, 1989. 668 pages.

☐ Gillespie, Sheena and Robert Singleton, eds. *Across Cultures: A Reader for Writers*. Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, 1991. 490 pages.

☐ Knepler, Henry and Myrna Knepler, eds. *Crossing Cultures: Readings for Composition*, 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan, 1991. 464 pages.

☐ Layton, Marilyn Smith, ed. *Intercultural Journeys through Reading and Writing*. New York: Harper-Collins, 1991. 638 pages.

☐ Madden-Simpson, Janet and Sara M. Blake, eds. *Emerging Voices: A Cross-Cultural Reader*. Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1990. 428 pages.

☐ Verburg, Carolyn J., ed. *Ourselves Among Others: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers*, 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1991. 703 pages.

Dr. Toni Empringham has a Ph.D. in English from the University of Southern California (1973) and has taught at El Camino College since 1974. She was an NEH Fellow at UC Santa Cruz for the 1976-77 academic year. In 1981 Capra Press (Santa Barbara) published Fiesta in Aztlan, *an anthology of Chicano literature collected and edited by Dr. Empringham.*

BOOKS TO REVIEW

If you are interested in reviewing any of the following books, please notify the editor, (see page 2). The book will be sent to you, and your review should be submitted within two months of receiving the book. Please follow the proper manuscript form (see page 2).

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ly indicate that I am about to open a textbook, with *Emerging Voices* a definite last choice. Albeit this is superficial criticism, covers sell books and attract readers, students and teachers alike.

Once past the packaging, I immediately noticed similarities in the way contents are grouped in *Across Cultures, Crossing Cultures*, and *Emerging Voices*. Subheadings are short, often one or two words: "Education," "Relationships," "Growing Up," "Customs," "Aspirations," etc. The brevity is appealing but occasionally too cryptic ("Reflections"? "Places"?). However, *Intercultural Journeys* leans too far in the other direction, producing clumsy results such as "The Challenges of Intercultural Experience"; "Culture and Language, Body Language, and Perception"; "Departures, Journeys, and (Sometimes) Returns."

Both *Rereading America* and *Ourselves Among Others* get my vote for subheadings that are lucid, occasionally provocative, and indicative of the way in which these texts successfully break free of the "here's another misunderstood, underrepresented, stereotyped minority" syndrome. In units entitled "The Changing Family," "Grading American Education," "Making a Living," and "Television and the Consumption of Images," *Rereading*

cultural anxiety. I like the variety and the generally high quality of selections in *Across Cultures, Intercultural Journeys*, and *Ourselves Among Others*, with the last being my top choice for its generous inclusion of "authors . . . of both literary and political importance" (iii), including Nadine Gordimer, Nelson Mandela, Simone de Beauvoir, Bruno Bettelheim, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, among others. *Rereading America* is another strong contender in the area of content, but I prefer to teach more short fiction than the text includes.

The selections themselves are important, but so also are the ancillary questions, comments, and suggestions intended to turn reading material into classroom discussions and writing prompts. Of these six, the most library-oriented text by far is *Emerging Voices*. Not only is each chapter followed by a list of suggestions for formal investigation, but also the editors have devoted eighty pages to a casebook on Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, including its own list of "Topics for Further Research." The other books are much more centered on dialogues between reader/writer and text/author. *Rereading America*, for example, in addition to questions on "Engaging the Text" and "Exploring Connections" (with other selections in the unit), offers suggestions for "Extending the Critical Context," which might involve journal entries or small group discussions rather than actual library research. *Across Cultures* provides short quotations preceding each unit along with journal entry questions. Assignments appropriate for journal writing, essays, group projects, and research follow individual selections, and additional writing topics conclude every chapter. Materials in *Crossing Cultures* are the least demanding. In fact, because of its inclusion of vocabulary questions ("Words to Know"), and the uncomplicated nature of its reading and writing questions, it might better suit the developmental or ESL classroom than a regular freshman composition class. *Intercultural Journeys* offers unique "Before you read [each selection]" writing assignments that are sometimes only a paragraph, sometimes a page or more more—precedes seven out of eight units and offers observations on each subject by U.S. writers.

Concluding my examination, I decided to climb aboard the cross-cultural express in the coming semester. My text will be *Ourselves Among Others* because of the variety and depth of its readings, the authors it includes, the provocative issues it raises, the opportunities for journal writing in "Looking at Ourselves," and because of the way I can integrate its material with the other texts I am using in freshman composition: *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing* (3rd edition), *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan, and *American Dreams: Lost and Found* by Studs Terkel. However, I was strongly tempted by the material in *Across Cultures* and *Rereading America* and also some very good stories and essays in *Intercultural Journeys* and am planning to reevaluate my choice in June.

Some final comments:

—Only *Across Cultures* devoted space—in its "Preface for the Teacher"—to a definition of culture. I submit that denotative and connotative definitions of *culture, subculture*, and *cross-cultural* are essential in approaching the material in these readers and might be handled in several ways: first essay of the semester, ten-minute freewriting exercise, group discussion, introduction to the dictionary, individual or collective brainstorming sessions, and so on. Using catch-phrases on book covers is not adequate.

—Some editors need to be more aware of the composition of most college-level writing classes. Most students are monolingual members of the white majority several generations removed from the immigrant experience. Therefore, more reading selections and discussion topics need to be sensitive to their feelings and reactions inside the classroom and while fulfilling assignments prompted by the text.

—We will do students a disservice if we give them an unrealistic picture of "culture" in America or the world, one that excludes

NEH Fellow at UC Santa Cruz for the 1976-77 academic year. In 1981 Capra Press (Santa Barbara) published Fiesta in Aztlan, *an anthology of Chicano literature collected and edited by Dr. Empringham.*

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Bartel, Roland. *Metaphors and Symbols: Forays into Language*. NCTE, 1983. [An older, still valuable book that *i.e.* has never reviewed.]

Bloom. *The Essay Connection: Readings for Writers*, 3rd ed. Heath, 1991.

Covino, William A. *Forms of Wondering: A Dialogue on Writing, for Writers*. Boynton/Cook, Heinemann, 1990.

Farr, Marcia and Harvey Daniels. *Language Diversity and Writing Instruction*. ERIC/NCTE, 1986.

Heffernan, William A. and Mark Johnston. *The Harvest Reader*, 2nd ed. HBJ, 1991.

Muller, Gilbert H. *The McGraw-Hill Reader: Themes in the Disciplines*. 4th ed. McGraw-Hill, 1991.

Murray, Donald M. *The Craft of Revision*. Holt, 1991.

Perkins, George, et. al. *The American Tradition in Literature*, 7th ed. McGraw-Hill, 1989.

Scholes, Robert, et al. *Elements of Literature: Essay, Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Film*, 4th ed. Oxford UP, 1991.

Strenski, Ellen and Madge Manfred. *The Research Paper Workbook*, 3rd ed. Longman, 1992.

Taylor, Ann. *Shaping the Short Essay*. HarperCollins, 1991.

ENGLISH COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA TWO-YEAR COLLEGES
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inside english

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INSIDE

inside english

ECCTYC Looks at Teaching Literature at All Levels

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Using explored literary works for subject matter, students discover how to write ballads and so launch their appreciation of poetry. Page 9

Melinda Barth shares her enthusiasm about teaching the uncommon, cherished "Love Poem." Page 3

Folsom inmates studying Greek mythology? They ques-

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RETHINKING THE CANON

"The Commonplace Book of Our Shared Culture"

by MARK NICOLL-JOHNSON
Merced College

Editor's Note:

The following article is adapted from Mark Nicoll-Johnson's presentation as part of the session "Introduction to Literature in the 1990s: Reconsidering Canon, Pedagogy, and Critical Theory," which featured Nicoll-Johnson and his colleagues Dallas Dillon and Vince Piro, at ECCTYC's Statewide Conference 1991.

When I caution my students about "history of the world" introductions, I remember my own habit of beginning papers with sentences that amounted to "Since the beginning of time . . . ." Trying to write about the literary canon, I have found myself lapsing again into that kind of thinking. But instead of invoking some ancient past, let me begin this with something more recent. (I reserve the option to resort to the ancient past later.)

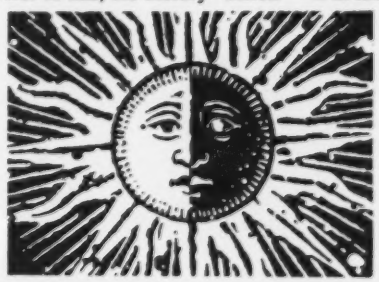
In an article published in 1989 in *The New York Times Book Review*, Henry Louis [the hearing] for its blend of passion, intrigue, revenge, spite, and so forth, but I would have urged my staff to dig up a different quote. Clearly, the only Shakespeare that the Wyoming Republican thought applied to Clarence Thomas is *Othello*, which Simpson or his staff chose, I sincerely hope, because it is a play concerned profoundly with reputation and not because its protagonist is a Moor. And Simpson's citation was pointedly relevant to the matter at hand:

> Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
> Is the immediate jewel of their souls;
> Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
> 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
> But he that filches from me my good name
> Robs me of that which not enriches him,
> And makes me poor indeed.
> (III,iii,155ff)

These lovely words from Iago, the irony of

we'd all probably agree that this was OK, even a good thing. Otherwise, we'd be much differently employed.

I think we'd all agree, too, that as language changes, so has the literary "canon." The idea that there exists a canon of texts in modern languages that should be formally included in a school or university education is an invention of the nineteenth century. Prior to this, the literary "canon"—if in fact



the term was used this way—consisted of the classics: texts that needed to be taught, since they were composed in dead languages. And, it's worth noting, these texts included works that, for much of this century at least, have not been considered "literary."

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room. Page 5

Using explored literary works for subject matter, students discover how to write ballads and so launch their appreciation of poetry. Page 9

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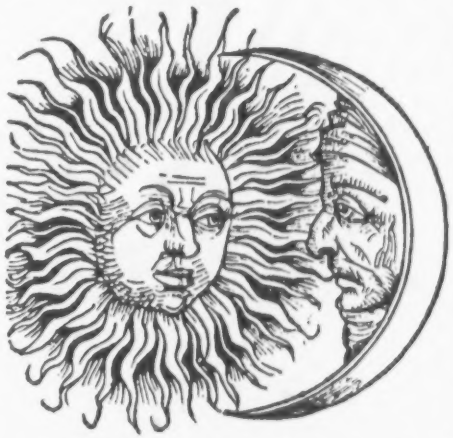
Johnson and his colleagues Dallas Dillon and Vince Piro, at ECCTYC's Statewide Conference 1991.

When I caution my students about "history of the world" introductions, I remember my own habit of beginning papers with sentences that amounted to "Since the beginning of time . . . ." Trying to write about the literary canon, I have found myself lapsing again into that kind of thinking. But instead of invoking some ancient past, let me begin this with something more recent. (I reserve the option to resort to the ancient past later.)

In an article published in 1989 in *The New York Times Book Review*, Henry Louis Gates observes that "the high canonical [is not] the reading matter of the power elite." To claim otherwise requires us "to imagine James Baker curling up with the 'Pisan Cantos,' Dan Quayle leafing through *The Princess Casamassima* (44).



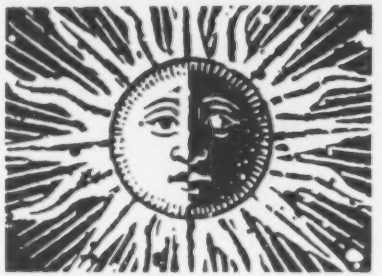
Professor Gates's observation was confirmed for me recently during the second round of the Supreme Court confirmation hearings when Senator Simpson of Wyoming, evidently hopeful of elevating the squalid atmosphere of the inquiry, quoted Shakespeare as a sort of charm to preserve Clarence Thomas from those who would impugn his reputation. I may agree with the Senator's assertion that the Bard would "love this" vant to the matter at hand:

> Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
> Is the immediate jewel of their souls;
> Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
> 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
> But he that filches from me my good name
> Robs me of that which not enriches him,
> And makes me poor indeed.
> (III,iii,155ff)

These lovely words from Iago, the irony of which we were not to think of during the confirmation hearings, are a good example of the E.D. Hirsch model of cultural literacy. All that matters is that it's a quote from Shakespeare, the very famous and revered English playwright (a universal genius, in fact), who wrote a timeless play (and these hearings prove it!) about a black man in which concern for reputation figures importantly.

I was grateful that this Republican literary diversion did not trigger another chain-reaction display of one-upmanship of the sort we witnessed at other times during the hearing, though it might have been entertaining to see just what other high canonical references might have spilled forth from other members of the panel. I would bet that no one would have considered finding something appropriate from Ralph Ellison.

Evolution of the canon, as well as ideas about canon, is, of course, nothing new, nor are, I suppose, the rancor and ill-will that often accompany the current debate. When I began teaching autonomously in the 1970s, during the early height of the composition crisis, I came across a complaint by a fourteenth-century E.D. Hirsch or Allen Bloom who was lamenting the decline of French among the aristocracy of England. He was right: French did wither away and die as the official language of the English ruling class. Six hundred years later,



the term was used this way—consisted of the classics: texts that needed to be taught, since they were composed in dead languages. And, it's worth noting, these texts included works that, for much of this century at least, have not been considered "literary."

One way of looking at the rise of English as an appropriate subject for university study and, more so, as the invariable element of the "core" curriculum is to see it as an extreme limitation of perspective. The "classically" educated gentleman of the eighteenth century was supposed to know languages other than his native tongue and was conversant in a diversity of cultures, even if he presumed the Greco-Roman line to be his own. And the "literature" he studied included not only poetry, epic, tragedy, and comedy, but also philosophy, history, oratory, and so forth.

In the current debate over the canon—the *what* and the *if* of it—I see a variety of approaches, each with a political agenda. Bloom, Hirsch, D'Souza, *et. al.* wish to conserve, one way or another, the great tradition they see threatened by the left/anarchist legacy of the sixties. Some want the canon merely expanded to include appropriate representatives from formerly excluded groups. Others insist on purging the canon of works that are expressions of intolerance or ethnocentrism, while still others question the idea of the canon in the first place.

The current dissensus about the Western literary canon has reached the public largely

(COMMONPLACE BOOK, Continued on Page 4)

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Letters

MULTICULTURAL TEXTS

As coeditor of a multicultural reader [*Emerging Voices*], I read with interest Dr. Empringham's review of multicultural composition texts ["*Rainbow Coalitions*," *i.e.*, 19 (September 1991): 7, 16]. I would like to add another element to the criteria that Dr. Empringham considered in her evaluation of a number of these texts.

These texts are of two types: those that focus on the world community and those that focus on the "American experience." Thus the instructor who decides to use a multicultural reader in a composition course must begin the selection process by making a fundamental choice about the course's scope. Appropriate texts for instructors who choose to take a world-community approach would include *Ourselves Among Others, Intercultural Journeys,* and *Crossing Cultures.* Texts that focus on the polycultural society of the United States include *Emerging Voices, Rereading America,* and *American Mosaic.*

SARA BLAKE
Assistant Professor, English
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RELYING ON *i.e.*

. . . thanks for a fabulous editon [September 1991]—timely, useful, well-put-together. Your [editorial] comments are right on the mark, and the articles and poems are invaluable.

I've come to rely on *i.e.* to keep me connected (in a way that *College English* doesn't quite do).

JUDITH KLINGER ROSE
Los Angeles Trade-Technical College

SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIPS

As Sustaining-Membership Co-Chair, I am pleased with the initial response to ECCTYC's invitation to individual English instructors. As of 31 October 1991, I have received ninety-eight memberships, these representing at least one individual from thirty-nine colleges. Lynn Fauth (Oxnard College) and I hope that this promising beginning will continue to grow, so that ECCTYC is more able to be involved in activities beneficial to us all, as well as to ensure the continued publication of our fine journal, *inside english.*

Of the issues that members would like ECCTYC to address, as we mention on the returned forms, the most often listed were the controversy over the IGETC/Critical Thinking requirement (9); ESL writing and other concerns, such as ESL problems in non-ESL classes (7); and the issue of matriculation (7). All of these issues were addressed at the San Diego Conference; ECCTYC drafted a position paper on the IGETC/Critical Thinking requirement; ESL writing was the topic of a workshop; matriculation was discussed in a workshop and in a meeting of the Articulation Officers; and other concerns, such as ESL problems in non-ESL classes, multicultural presence on the ECCTYC Board, and dealing with "the enormous problem of poor intercollege information flow; finding a way to do this more effectively through the regions."

Some of these concerns were addressed in the most recent issue of *i.e.*, which focused on multicultural approaches in English classes. We encourage all English instructors, all of whom are members of ECCTYC, to get involved in Regional Conferences to talk about the issues most pressing in their area's colleges. Regional Directors can then bring this information to the semi-annual Board meetings for action. We also encourage you to write articles or letters to the editor relating to these or other issues.

BILL DECKER
Membership Co-Chair
College of the Sequoias

COACHING VARSITY

I'm writing to tell you how much I enjoy my subscription to *inside english.* I teach in the community colleges and adult schools, and I also teach private workshops. My private students are working adults. Some have no high school diploma, some have advanced degrees in literature, language, or another discipline. They are not, however, members of the writing community of the academe. I find that the issues confronted in *inside english,* particularly in the multicultural issue [September 1991] and in articles like "The Amateur in the Classroom" [May 1991] are the ones I confront in every arena. They offer teaching strategies geared to my students' needs and they also remind me that I'm coaching varsity, not second string.

Thank you.

NANCY SHIFFRIN

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Send poems to Robert Rippy, *inside english* Poetry Editor, San Bernardino Valley College, 701 So. Mt. Vernon Avenue, San Bernardino, CA 92403. Send all other submissions to Barbara Bilson Woodruff, *inside english* Editor, Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90405.

Subscription rates for departments are $55 to $75 per year (depending on the number of issues required) and $30 dollars per year for commercial subscriptions. Remittance should be made payable to ECCTYC and sent to Richard McIntosh, ECCTYC Treasurer, Cypress College, 9200 Valley View, Cypress, CA 90630. Individual subscriptions include membership in ECCTYC and are $15 per year. Remittance should be made payable to ECCTYC and sent to Bill Decker, ECCTYC Membership Chair, College of the Sequoias, 915 Mooney Blvd., Visalia, CA 93277.

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Other issues mentioned more than once were part-time faculty (6); basic/developmental writing (4); collaborative learning/writing groups in composition (4); requirement for demonstrated composition skills (grading) (2); and workload for composition teachers, including class size (2). People also voiced concern about or interest in interdisciplinary cooperation, staff development, technical writing, doublespeak, practical advice on English 1 A (what's working in our classes) and what courses 1 and 2 levels below should be, curriculum transformation, motivating minority students in composition classes, cross-cultural approach to world literature as well as reviews on anthologies of fiction, highlighting multicultural perspectives, problems of Black dialect students in reading and composition classes, the interrelationship between oral reading proficiency and writing proficiency, writing vs. reading vs. speaking, relevant topics for journals, using student conferences in writing classes, a suggestion corner in *i.e.* for brief recommendations, summaries of key articles in other journals relative to our discipline. They are not, however, members of the writing community of the academe. I find that the issues confronted in *inside english*, particularly in the multicultural issue [September 1991] and in articles like "The Amateur in the Classroom" [May 1991] are the ones I confront in every arena. They offer teaching strategies geared to my students' needs and they also remind me that I'm coaching varsity, not second string.

Thank you.

NANCY SHIFFRIN

Notices

Please send announcements and information about workshops, conferences, calls for papers, and other activities of interest to the profession to "Notices" by the deadlines noted in each issue. They will be run on a space-available basis.

CONFERENCES

27-30 December 1991. MLA (MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION) ANNUAL CONVENTION. San Francisco Hilton, San Francisco, CA.

The 1991 MLA convention features sessions ranging from "Discovering the Manuscript of *Huckleberry Finn*" and "Captivity and Captivation in Early American Letters" to "Women as Creative Agents," "Which Books Get Published and Why," "Political Correctness and Pedagogy," and "Pornogra-

(NOTICES, Continued on Page 20)

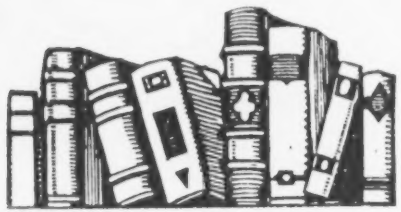
A SHOT AT THE CANON

All *Nimsy* Were the *Bulls* and *Burs*

by MELINDA BARTH
El Camino College

In a variation of that old question—"Which few authors and which few books would you take to a deserted island?"—McHoltLittleRineHeath Publishers recently wrote to ask me to list the ten works of literature no contemporary anthology should be without.

I am not going to reveal here all of my prejudices and predilections. But I responded,



in part, with one poem that no one else would list, and yet it's a poem I always use in an Introduction to Literature course. Let me share and defend my choice: "Love Poem" by John Frederick Nims. It is perfect in its simplicity; ideal in its employing numerous techniques, devices, and figures; and it is so lovely in theme that I am surprised to have found the poem in only two anthologies in a decade, and one of those times printed with an error. Let us here get it right:

LOVE POEM

My clumsiest dear, whose hands shipwreck vases,
At whose quick touch all glasses chip and ring,
Whose palms are bulls in china, burs in linen,
And have no cunning with any soft thing

Except all ill-at-ease fidgeting people:
The refugee uncertain at the door
You make at home; deftly you steady
The drunk clambering on his undulant floor.

Unpredictable dear, the taxi drivers' terror,
Shrinking from far headlights pale as a dime
Yet leaping before red apoplectic streetcars—
Misfit in any space. And never on time.

A wrench in clocks and the solar system. Only
With words and people and love you move at ease.
In traffic of wit expertly manoeuvre
And keep us, all devotion, at your knees.

Forgetting your coffee spreading on our flannel,
Your lipstick grinning on our coat,
So gayly in love's unbreakable heaven
Our souls on glory of spilt bourbon float.

Be with me, darling, early and late. Smash glasses—
I will study wry music for your sake.
For should your hands drop white and empty,
All the toys of the world would break.
(Kennedy 750-751).

No student has ever failed to grasp the simple but not simplistic point of the poem: The speaker's "dear" is dramatically clumsy, but a loving and lovable klutz who has graceful patterns with people. The poem's accessibility in diction, tone, and meaning makes it instantly compelling for the students and deserving of a closer look, which they are willing to give it.

The most immediate "look" is actually through the ears. I don't know a better poem for teaching Pope's admonition to let the "Sound Echo the Sense" ("Essay on Criticism," lines 365-367). Sure, I've tried those "loud Surges [that] lash the Sounding Shore," but when I get to the "Soft . . . strain when Zephyr gently blows," and the "smooth Stream in smoother Numbers flows," I realize that connecting students with these allusions is an illusion, especially if I'm still trying to teach sound and sense.

I've concluded that true ease in teaching comes from different parts, if not arts, and I turn to Nims to show how in "Love Poem" he uses alternating *cacophony* and *euphony* to let sound parallel description of the "unpredictable dear" and to underscore the entire point of his poem. The description is a contrast between the rough actions of the

woman, "At whose quick touch all glasses chip and ring," with her mellifluous movements, when "With words and people and love [she moves] at ease." Nims' uses of *onomatopoeia*—"chip," "ring," "apoplectic," and "Smash"—are also ear-pleasing, and his use of *enjambment* is skilled. I admire his technique in moving the reader from those entirely negative first descriptions to the softer description of the woman who has "no cunning with any soft thing/Except all ill-at-ease fidgeting people." What understatement the enjambment heightens! And for the same sound-echoing-sense reason, I delight in the *meter* shift in the lines that celebrate this couple's joyous dance: "So gayly in love's unbreakable heaven/Our souls on glory of spilt bourbon float."

Even within our canon, the cliché's of conventional love poetry have been challenged, notably by Shakespeare when he proclaims his "Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun."

(ALL NIMSY . . ., Continued on Page 12)

PHILOSOPHY AND PEDAGOGY

More Thoughts on Teaching Poetry

75

by HARRY TEITELBAUM

(Bates), they are even more vocal today when American teen-

prestige to the scientist: a world that honors the laboratory more than the study, that reveres the practical thinker more than the dreamer. Is it any wonder, then, that today's youth finds it difficult when "he is called upon to join in a game of words, to realize the richness and history of experience behind each word, to enter into an emotional experience with the writer of the poem, to use his imagination to its fullest extent,

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simplicity; ideal in its employing numerous techniques, devices, and figures; and it is so lovely in theme that I am surprised to have found the poem in only two anthologies in a decade, and one of those times printed with an error. Let us here get it right:

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I turn to Nims to show how in "Love Poem" he uses alternating *cacophony* and *euphony* to let sound parallel description of the "unpredictable dear" and to underscore the entire point of his poem. The description is a contrast between the rough actions of the spilt bourbon float.

Even within our canon, the cliché's of conventional love poetry have been challenged, notably by Shakespeare when he proclaims his "Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun."

(ALL NIMSY . . ., Continued on Page 12)

PHILOSOPHY AND PEDAGOGY

More Thoughts on Teaching Poetry

by HARRY TEITELBAUM
Saddleback College

That the teaching of poetry in the secondary schools and at the college level is an integral part of the English curriculum is an established fact. And that the teaching of this art form presents perhaps the greatest challenge to the teacher of English is borne out by the many articles in English and education journals, presenting a wide array of suggestions and panaceas for overcoming students' apathy and antipathy and detailing what has worked for these instructors with their students. Some authors give broad outlines of courses; others suggest an intricate analysis of a few selected poems. Some propose that poetry can best be taught through a careful study of form and mechanics; others stress emotional responses. Some feel that the biographical-sociological approach is most rewarding; others want students to rely solely on the poem. All present their arguments clearly and forcefully.

But questions then arise: Do these methods have any value? Do they have anything in common? Which of these methods, if any, achieves the best results? How effective is the "new criticism" approach in teaching poetry? Let us take a look at the thinking on this subject and see if there are any answers to these questions.

Each year a discouragingly large number of instructors discover anew that students just do not like poetry. Each year students cry: "If he wanted to say it, why didn't he say it so people could understand?" The more vocal and outspoken will object more bluntly: "What do we have to learn this junk for?" Some feel, as Charles Shafer discovered when he asked his students why they thought they were studying poetry, that English teachers enjoy seeing their students squirm (2). Even though these plaints have been heard for at least this century (Bates), they are even more vocal today when American teenagers feed on the pablum diet, occasionally reinforced by some strong vitamins, that the mass media toss at them daily. With but the flick of the remote control, they can have their "literature" presented in easily digestible morsels that require little, if any, chewing or digesting. Newspapers have become more visual; magazines compete for the teenagers' attention; publishers present them with a choice of book digests; and they can even read the classics in comic book form or wait until the

latest extravaganza comes to the local movie theater. Is it then any wonder that students should reject a literary form that presents difficulty in comprehension, a form that they find difficult to relate to themselves or their experiences?

The young adult exists in a world that gives ever-increasing prestige to the scientist: a world that honors the laboratory more than the study, that reveres the practical thinker more than the dreamer. Is it any wonder, then, that today's youth finds it difficult when "he is called upon to join in a game of words, to realize the richness and history of experience behind each word, to enter into an emotional experience with the writer of the poem, to use his imagination to its fullest extent, and to draw on his sense of empathy [and] to dispel illusions that poetry is 'sissy' and flower, written by . . . dreamers . . ." (Harrison 253)?

Yet their strong antipathy to poetry is somewhat surprising when one takes into account that all young children delight in poetry; they enjoy playing rhyme games and singing simple rhymes. Even teenagers like rhythm in dancing, in music. What happens between childhood and adolescence to cause young people to dislike poetry?

Although J.N. Hook in *The Teaching of High School English* describes students' reactions some forty years ago, his findings are as valid as today. He found that not all students have this aversion, but those who dislike poetry usually offer one or more of the six following reasons (176-177):

1. Poetry is artificial. They feel that people do not talk like that, that rhyme is kind of silly, that poets put their words together in a funny way, and that if the poet is talking about sheep, '. . . why doesn't he say *sheep* instead of *bleating kind*?'

2. Some students who are aware that poetry is highly compressed express a dislike for this compression because 'You have to use your imagination too much to fill in the details. . . ."

3. More mature students may dislike poetry because of unfamiliarity, but they suppose that '. . . a person has to get used to poetry just as he does to olives or dill pickles.'

4. Much of poetry is not sufficiently rewarding: 'You read it and sweat over it and then what do you get out of it? Either something that you already know, or a description of something you don't care about, or an explanation of how the poet feels about a woman or a skylark.'

5. Another objection relates to the method of teaching and

(TEACHING POETRY, Continued on Page 14)

COMMONPLACE BOOK

(Continued from Page 1)

through the efforts of people such as E.D. Hirsch, Allan Bloom, William Bennet and Dinesh D'Souza. In their reaction against the "politization" of the university curriculum, these preservationists have contributed to the idea that the canon is an unchanging, monolithic dispensary of wisdom. Asserting that the Western tradition is founded on objectively observable universal truths that transcend ideology, preservationists seem to have reclaimed the religious connotations of the word "canon," for the body of works they promote seems no longer to be subject to critical reading, but rather is presented as an unassailable, fixed source of wisdom. This is not what I learned in school, and I think I was exposed in quite conventional ways to the traditions of Western humanism. What I saw was a range of points of view, some sharp contrasts and disjunctures, all of which were subject to critical appraisal. "Canon" is not a term heard much, and it's just as well because of the air of sanctity this word carries with it that has been revived, critically by the academic left and reverently by the right.

In petrifying the canon, preservationists deny the history of the tradition they ostensibly defend. As this argument is reduced to its broadest terms and presented in the mass media, it becomes almost a self-caricature, as do the correspondingly diluted counter-arguments. At their worst, arguments on the extremes of the dissensus surrounding the canon seem to be assaulting or defending a monolith. The canon does change, even if the only reason for admitting or deleting works is shifting aesthetic standards, and it does include works that fundamentally contradict one another. Ironically, the political and critical positions seen by some as most threatening to the canon are actually firmly rooted in the works of such Dead White European Males as Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, in a recent issue of *inside english* that any focus "on the female 'greats' (however revolutionary that concept in itself may be) as if they were merely regendered clones of the old familiar male 'greats' neglects to intervene in the culture's systematic hegemony in any thorough or lasting way" (8). That is, the "transcendental, universal, non-ideological" aesthetic also needs revision, which, it seems to me, has been going on in one way or another for quite some time. This is, perhaps, why William Blake usurped Sir Walter Scott's seat in the clubroom, or why the shockingly revolutionary Wordsworth (of *Lyrical Ballads*) was admitted in the first place.

However, Henry Louis Gates defends the notion of a canon in somewhat different terms from the traditionalist. His work in editing *The Norton Anthology of Afro-American Literature* has "required [him] to negotiate a position between those on the cultural right who claim that black literature can have no canon, no masterpieces, and those on the cultural left who wonder why anyone wants to establish the existence of a canon, any canon, in the first place" (44-45). While he claims that a "thoroughly integrated canon of American literapicions aroused by deconstructionists about the relationship of signifier and signified. Edward Hoagland, a distinguished writer of essays and stories, does not distinguish among techniques of writing fiction and non-fiction. Barry Lopez, a natural historian and fiction writer, busies himself in marginal terrain and explores many of the same concerns in his fiction and non-fiction. Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey* is clearly a novel, but what are *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*? Lopez and Kingston are writers whose sometimes difficult-to-classify works belong quotations derive from local histories, monographs, interviews, essays, and more obviously literary works, most surprisingly from *Tristram Shandy*, as if Least Heat-Moon would like to see his own book constellated among these others. Perhaps the excerpts in the commonplace book provide some hint at what Gates might call the "complex ancestry, one high and low (that is literary and vernacular)" of *Prairyerth*.

Least Heat-Moon seems to be teasing the distinction between literary and non-literary writing, reminding us that the distinction between fiction and non-fiction is not always clear (think of Herodotus). The current boom in "literary non-fiction" seems to confirm suscourses. I would claim that we are teaching something like a methodology of critical reading to empower students to read in various ways for various present and future purposes, and that the choice of texts suitable for these purposes is wide open. We are fortunate at the community college or lower division level not to be burdened with the onerous responsibility of serving as the keepers of the flame. Minimally, we want our students to leave our courses reading skillfully and carefully to survive the remainder of their academic careers so that we will not be ashamed in the eyes of our peers, but we can always work for better than that minimum. We are the lucky ones who get to light some fires of enthusiasm that might burn brightly long after Intro to Lit, long past transfer or graduation.

In the preface to *Winter Count*, his 1981 collection of stories, Barry Lopez writes:

> Among several tribes on the northern plains, the passage of time from one summer to the next was marked by noting a single memorable event. The sequence of such memories, recorded pictographically on a buffalo robe or spoken aloud, was called a winter count. Several winter counts might be

(COMMONPLACE BOOK, Continued on Page 12)

A LOVE SONG FOR POETRY

"I don't like poetry,"
the English 1B student announced.

"Made for teachers, only teachers,
who hold keys to its mysteries
sacred, tight, as if afraid to let us in—
like sex, only more,
because we learn the secrets of sex
despite—
but there's no getting close to poetry.
No one to lead us in,

bly defend. As this argument is reduced to its broadest terms and presented in the mass media, it becomes almost a self-caricature, as do the correspondingly diluted counter-arguments. At their worst, arguments on the extremes of the dissensus surrounding the canon seem to be assaulting or defending a monolith. The canon does change, even if the only reason for admitting or deleting works is shifting aesthetic standards, and it does include works that fundamentally contradict one another. Ironically, the political and critical positions seen by some as most threatening to the canon are actually firmly rooted in the works of such Dead White European Males as Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, and Foucault. The assault on the canon is largely an inside job and can be interpreted in some of its most ancient terms: dialectics goes back at least as far as Heracleitus.

The canon or our idea of it will continue to change, and writing will remain to be read whether canonical or not. But I suspect we will not throw out ideas about literary canons. In an article entitled "Feminism and Literature," Elaine Showalter writes that "canon formation . . . is now understood as a historically grounded process, rather than an assertion of aesthetic value" (193). In support of this she quotes Henry Louis Gates, who says, in part, that "writers read other writers and ground their representations of experience in models of language provided by other writers to whom they feel akin." Showalter goes on to say that "we will never abolish canons," but that they can be demystified by revealing the "social and historical relativity of aesthetic standards" (194). This position of Showalter and Gates resembles one endorsed by Ezra Pound, who, mistrustful of academics, suggests that readers look to other writers for a sense of what writing is really important or influential (334).

Traditionalists allow for the canon to be extended. Excellent works may be included in the club, no matter who writes them. Critical of such an extension of membership on the club's old terms, Nancy Gray writes

However, Henry Louis Gates defends the notion of a canon in somewhat different terms from the traditionalist. His work in editing *The Norton Anthology of Afro-American Literature* has "required [him] to negotiate a position between those on the cultural right who claim that black literature can have no canon, no masterpieces, and those on the cultural left who wonder why anyone wants to establish the existence of a canon, any canon, in the first place" (44-45). While he claims that a "thoroughly integrated canon of American literature is not only politically sound, it is intellectually sound as well," he also asserts that it is vital to see "a black text . . . within its own tradition, a tradition . . . defined by . . . the repetition and revision of shared themes, topoi, and tropes . . .' (45). Gates says that "the canon is, in no very grand sense, the commonplace book of our shared culture, the archive of those texts and titles we wish to remember" (44).

Gates uses the idea of the commonplace book to open the canon to "literary and vernacular" texts, and this idea serendipitously plays into another idea about ways in which the canon might be opened, namely the question of heretofore marginalized genres and the not always so clear distinction between literary and non-literary writing. William Least Heat-Moon's recently published *Prairyerth* seems to illustrate the point. This book is a "deep map" of Chase County, Kansas, a sparsely populated rectangular chunk of prairie very near the center of the lower forty-eight states, *i.e.* about as close as one might get to the geographic center of the United States, the place where the West begins. Each chapter is preceded by a section (an interchapter?) called "From the Commonplace Book" in which Least Heat-Moon has compiled interesting quotations from a variety of sources apparently consulted or recalled during the writing of his book. These picions aroused by deconstructionists about the relationship of signifier and signified. Edward Hoagland, a distinguished writer of essays and stories, does not distinguish among techniques of writing fiction and non-fiction. Barry Lopez, a natural historian and fiction writer, busies himself in marginal terrain and explores many of the same concerns in his fiction and non-fiction. Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey* is clearly a novel, but what are *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*? Lopez and Kingston are writers whose sometimes difficult-to-classify works belong in the big commonplace book, as do M.F.K. Fisher's books about food (and hunger), along with the fictionalized non-fiction of Henry Thoreau and the slave narratives, diaries, and letters, which have undergone recent critical evaluation.

With the canon/commonplace book open wide there need be no question of cutting out works to make room for new ones. I do not think the canon needs to be a list that one manages to cover in a prescribed number of years of undergraduate and graduate education. The canon does not need to be comprehended within a curriculum. It isn't now. As Professor Douglas Taylor pointed out at CSU Stanislaus in a recent debate about the literary canon, the English curriculum can be no more than a sampling of the universe of literature/discourse.

As we consider what to do with the wide open canon I've hinted at, we need to consider the sorts of basic questions about what we are up to posed by Robert Scholes in *Textual Power*. What are we trying to teach? Why are we trying to teach it? What texts do we select in order to do this? I would add, also, Whom are we teaching?—the answer to which is perhaps the least likely to be controversial. Here and now we are talking about community college students in introductory literature

Continued on Page 12)

A LOVE SONG FOR POETRY

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the English 1B student announced.

"Made for teachers, only teachers,
who hold keys to its mysteries
sacred, tight, as if afraid to let us in—
like sex, only more,
because we learn the secrets of sex
despite—
but there's no getting close to poetry.
No one to lead us in,
only around, like marchers trying to bring
down the walls of Jericho
then not quite sure why they fell,
or what was left . . . rubble.

"I have no patience for poetry.
Someone's secret code. Like assigning a
number
to every letter in the alphabet
and asking a student to 'Guess, just guess
what I mean.
I dare you.'
Hrumph.
I have no patience for poetry.

"I've things to do in this world:
jobs to hold, children to raise,
people to get to know.
Don't trouble me with poetry."

KRIS ANDERSON
Riverside Community College

Kris Anderson teaches composition, literature, and creative writing. She also serves on the executive board of the Riverside Poetry Society (a community organization) and ekes out time for writing whenever possible.

Anderson wrote "A Love Song for Poetry" as an "attempt to put into words the qualms many of my Composition and Literature students have about the study of poetry. Something in them resists poetry—sometimes with the conviction expressed by the hypothetical student in my poem. Understanding the students' point of view has helped me to ease their fears and open their minds. But my quest is not over. I continue to explore ways to make the study of poetry more accessible to students, and I welcome any suggestions from my colleagues."

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THEY'RE ALL TALKING AND LISTENING AND WRITING AND READING

Reader-Response Theory as a First Step in a Literature Class

by VINCENT F. PIRO
Merced College

Language Arts instruction is moving from a teacher-centered to a student-centered discipline. As Paulo Freire explains it, our teaching has been based on the "banking" concept of education, "in which the students are the depositories and the teacher the depositor . . . in which the scope of the action allowed the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing deposits" (58). In other words, the *teacher's* knowledge is the focus of the class. However, today, there is a new concept of education in which the students are active, engaged meaning-makers. They do not sit passively, waiting to be filled with the teacher's knowledge; instead,

they actively examine ideas, emotions, and events as they question, analyze, and evaluate, creating their *own* meaning and knowledge. As Ken Goodman points out, the best learning takes place when "Speaking, listening, writing, and reading are all happening in context of the exploration of the world of things, events, ideas, and experiences" (30).

The English Coalition states what results this new concept years old—experts on these subjects.

To prevent such reader's block, we need to let students know that it is fine to start discussions of the text not with formal analysis but with informal discussion about the ideas, emotions, and lives found in or stimulated by the texts and to connect their own ideas, feelings, and experiences to the text. As Louise Rosenblatt states in *Literature as Exploration*,

> Certainly for the great majority of readers, the human experience that the literature presents is primary. For them the formal elements of the work—style and structure, rhythmic flow—function only as part of the total literary experience. The reader seeks to participate in another's vision—to reap knowledge of the world, to fathom the resources of the human spirit, to gain insights that will make his life more comprehensible. (7)

By allowing our students to enter the text in this way, we can promote rather than hinder discussion, and create active classrooms in which our students explore and discover rather than passively sit and absorb. Moreover, these students are now ready and excited to move into more sophisticated critical analysis of the text because it, as one student notes, "has come to mean something to us." Of course, all this theory leaves us with that pragmatic, nagging question, "So what do we do on Monday morning?"

As an answer to that question, I use a few discussion guides that not only help my students see that it is fine to discuss ideas and emotions generated by literature but also, when completed, give them some writing to start their discussions. The discussion guides are based on the premise that a discussion involves both speaking and listening and that writing about a reading generates ideas for one to talk about. I have gone to the work of experts in the field of reader-response theory, most notably Louise Rosenblatt and Robert Probst, who are surprisingly pragmatic, offering many Monday-morning tips.

The plan is simple. The students read a literary test for homework and then, using the discussion guides for direction, do a one-page minimum focused freewriting in their Reader's Notebook. Peter Elbow notes the advantages to freewriting: "Because freewriting is an invitation to become less self-conscious about writing, to stop attending consciously to the

*I still wonder what happened after_____
(What else would you like to know?)

*I admired_____because_____
(How do you feel about him/her?)

*I found it (exciting/strange/etc.) when_____
(What did you think?)

*I enjoyed the part where_____
(What part did you enjoy?)

*I felt that_____should have_____
(What advice would you give?)

*In this book I learned that_____
(Was there anything you learned?)

*Something similar once happened to me when_____
(Can you tell something similar that once happened to you?)

In *Book Discussion Clubs for Adult New Readers,* Oakley suggests that the leader of the book club should use the discussion guide to engage students in the discussion of a commonly read book. The questions in parentheses are questions he or she addresses to members of the class. My approach is somewhat different.

My students use the questions simply to stimulate a freewriting. While many of them particularly at the start of the semester "fill in the blanks," I have noticed that their responses are honest and often insightful. And more importantly, the students are beginning to interact with the text and to make connections between literature and life. For example, Kiyo writes about Liliana Heker's short story "The Stolen Party,"

> I liked when the magician thanked Rosaura and called her a little countess. She needed an ego-lift because her mom is a negative person who will prompt the child to develop low self-esteem. . . . It wasn't that I necessarily learned something from this article [sic], but it reminded me of the fact that people in lower social classes have got to overcome their

they actively examine ideas, emotions, and events as they question, analyze, and evaluate, creating their *own* meaning and knowledge. As Ken Goodman points out, the best learning takes place when "Speaking, listening, writing, and reading are all happening in context of the exploration of the world of things, events, ideas, and experiences" (30).

The English Coalition states what results this new concept of education should have on the Language Arts classroom: "Such a course would stress an active, interactive theory of learning (rather than theory of teaching), that assumes that students do not learn by being passive eavesdroppers on an academic conversation or vessels into which knowledge is poured" (Lloyd-Jones and Lunsford 27). I suspect that the symbol representing the Language Arts classroom of the future will not be the lectern, cluttered with an instructor's notes about a subject he or she has analyzed and will lecture on, but rather the student desk, cluttered with notes about a subject that the student has explored and is ready to discuss.

"Good, fine and dandy," you say with more than a bit of skepticism. "Let's have the students explore the subject." And as you say this, visions of mortuary-like classes fill your head. You've more than once assigned a reading and then the next day asked your students to discuss it, only to be met with blank stares and open mouths. (Worse yet, you know these are the students who have done the reading.) You know that at least by lecturing someone will be saying something.

However, it is not that our students have nothing to say; it is that they are uncertain about what is proper academic discourse. When I ask my students why they do not speak up in class, a student typically responds that he or she knows nothing about literature. I suspect that most of our students believe we are waiting for insightful literary analysis on the text before them and that this performance anxiety creates a "reader's block," which prevents them from exploring the text at all. Our students fail to see that literature is first and foremost about life and the human experience (often because they feel we see literature only as poetic forms and literary devices) and that they are—even as early as eighteen

As an answer to that question, I use a few discussion guides that not only help my students see that it is fine to discuss ideas and emotions generated by literature but also, when completed, give them some writing to start their discussions. The discussion guides are based on the premise that a discussion involves both speaking and listening and that writing about a reading generates ideas for one to talk about. I have gone to the work of experts in the field of reader-response theory, most notably Louise Rosenblatt and Robert Probst, who are surprisingly pragmatic, offering many Monday-morning tips.

The plan is simple. The students read a literary test for homework and then, using the discussion guides for direction, do a one-page minimum focused freewriting in their Reader's Notebook. Peter Elbow notes the advantages to freewriting: "Because freewriting is an invitation to become less self-conscious about writing, to stop attending consciously to the choosing and forming of words, it helps me enter more easily and fully into my writing and thinking" (210). When they next return to class, the students use their focused freewritings to begin discussions. The discussion guides have let them know exactly what they can write about, that the personal response is the first response expected.

DISCUSSION GUIDE ONE

The first discussion guide was created by Marcia Pollack Fineman for Project: LEARN in Cleveland, Ohio. Nancy Oakley, the director of Project: LEARN, notes that the program uses the guide to stimulate discussion in adult literacy classes and to help students "to read with a focus on pleasure and sharing rather than on facts and the fear of wrong answers"(6).

The students, as noted above, read a literary text for homework and complete a freewriting, using the prompts on the discussion guide for stimulus.

Discussion Guide 1

*I like when _____
(What did you like?)

*I didn't like when _____
(Was there anything you didn't like?)

*I agree with the way _____
(How do you feel about that?)

*I disagree with the way _____
(How do you feel about that?)

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> I liked when the magician thanked Rosaura and called her a little countess. She needed an ego-lift because her mom is a negative person who will prompt the child to develop low self-esteem. . . . It wasn't that I necessarily learned something from this article [sic], but it reminded me of the fact that people in lower social classes have got to overcome their willingness to accept their "so called predetermined place"in life and encourage their youth to strive to achieve goals and not feel inferior to anyone.

Kiyo's passage reminds us "that readers, especially young readers, respond most readily to literature as an embodiment of human personalities, human situations, human conflicts and achievements" (Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration* vii).

Kiyo shared this passage with other members of her group as they shared theirs with her. Then later, as the class discussed the story, Kiyo's response led to talk about Rosaura's situation and the relationships among the social classes. We discussed how these relationships are often filled with conflict, tension, and pain. This naturally led to a more formalist approach, in which we analyzed the way Heker recreated social conflict

(READER RESPONSE, Continued on Page 8)

INTRODUCING STUDENTS TO LITERATURE

by JOAN FRY
Glendale Community College

About the only thing X.J. Kennedy and Beverly Lawn agree on is that the anthologies they have put together represent an introduction to literature—specifically, fiction, poetry, and drama. They do agree, more or less, on what a "story" is, and a poem, and a play. But after that, it's all up for grabs. Kennedy breaks each genre down into its essential components and then discusses them; Lawn's approach is strictly chronological. Kennedy provides ample supplemental material; Lawn provides hardly any. Kennedy wants to stimulate his students to think, and after that, to appreciate; Lawn wants them to look at the best that has been written. Even though both editors have chosen many of the same works, the resulting books are as different as they can possibly be.

Of the two, Kennedy's *Literature* is the more ambitious. It is also more intellectual and fun to read—a real treasure-trove. In his first section, "Fiction," Kennedy breaks the idea of "story" into its components: point of view, character, setting, theme, symbol, etc. Then he offers readers twenty-five stories that illustrate each concept. Accompanying the point of view chapter, for example, are Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," Katherine Mansfield's "Miss Brill," Toni Cade Bambara's "Blues Ain't No Mockin Bird," and Poe's "The Tell-tale Heart."

Then Kennedy presents additional stories from three writers—Chekhov, Flannery O'Connor, and Raymond Carver—to be studied in depth. After that, he provides an additional eighteen stories "for further reading"—arranged alphabetically by author's last name.

Kennedy's fiction selections provided me with a wide variety of stories to choose from. Some of the stories are old favorites, like Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" and Joyce's "Araby." Others are new to me, like Ann Beattie's "Janus" and Raymond Carver's "Cathedral" and Alice Munro's "The Found Boat."

All in all, the "Fiction" section boasts a total of fifty-three stories—a cornucopia that includes the old-timers (Hawthorne, Poe), the foreign-born (Isaac Bashevis Singer, Yasunari Kawabata), women (Kate Chopin, Alice Munro), and minority writers (Toni Cade Bambara, Jamaica Kincaid). Each chapter concludes with "Suggestions for Writing," and each individual story is followed by questions designed to stimulate discussion. One of the questions following "A Rose for Emily" is, "Who is the unnamed narrator? For whom does he profess to be speaking?"

To conclude the section on fiction, Kennedy has appended a critical section offering comments by writers like Poe, Flaubert, Chekhov, and Henry James that indicate what they thought they were up to in their own work and how they judged others' work.

Kennedy has also included a brief biography and photograph of each short story writer. For students unsure of what somebody like T. Coraghessan Boyle, for example, is up to, these bio notes—usually accompanied by a few astute critical asides—are a decided help.

Not surprisingly, since Kennedy himself is a poet, the poetry section is especially sumptuous. Kennedy invites students to respond to the poems he has chosen first by "Listening to a Voice." Next he asks them to pay attention to individual words (the chapter is subdivided into "Literal Meaning: What a Poem Says First" and "Word Choice and Word Order") and then to listen to what the poet is actually "Saying and Suggesting." Other chapters are organized around concepts such as "Imagery," "Figures of Speech," "Song," "Sound," "Rhythm," "Closed Form and Open Form," "Symbol," and "Myth."

No questions follow the poems. Instead, Kennedy suggests other poems to be compared with the poem under discussion. For

to write about literature: they can explicate a work, analyze it, or compare it with something else. He slights nothing, from explaining how to keep a journal to how to document a research paper.

In three separate and self-contained sections—"Writing a Story," "Writing a Poem," and "Writing a Play"—Kennedy explains how to write a story and why revising it is so important, how to begin a poem, and

how a dramatist reaches his or her audience.

What exactly is Kennedy up to with this profusion of original work, brief encounters with MLA-annotated papers, and "how-to" advice? He tells us in his preface: "the book is an attempt to provide the college student with a reasonably compact introduction to the *study and appreciation of* stories, poems, and plays" (xxxix). (Italics mine.)

In contrast, the intent of Beverly Lawn's *Literature: 150 Masterpieces of Fiction, Poetry, and Drama* is stated in her subtitle, and with one important exception she doesn't stray very far from the old standbys that any "educated" person can fairly be expected to have read.

Like Kennedy's book, Lawn's anthology contains selections from fiction, poetry, and drama. Lawn includes Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." But where Kennedy has a total of fifty-three stories, Lawn has forty. A lot of European writers (mostly male, all dead) appear: Tolstoy, de Maupassant, Joyce, Kafka, D.H. Lawrence. But then Lawn thrusts us willy-nilly into the present with writers such as Grace Paley, Nadine Gordimer, Gabriel Garcia Marquez (whose name, for some reason, is missing from the index), Estela Portillo Trambley, Joyce Carol Oates, Alice Walker, Ann Beattie, and Jayne Anne Phillips. In her preface Lawn argues that "history and tradition are ongoing processes that broaden and refocus even as anthologies such as this one are published and revised" (iii). What she seems to be saying is that the concept of "masterpiece" is relative and subject to change. But just to make sure we appreciate what she's done, she takes pains to tell us that she has included "fifteen short stories, twenty-five poems, and two plays by women, and five stories, eight poems, and one play by American minority writers" (iv).

In "Introduction to Poetry" Lawn discusses the basics of the genre, from what a poem means—"largely the product of the nature and sequence of a poem's words" (354)—to the role of metaphor—"the foundation of all poetic imagery" (351). The poetry section itself offers one hundred selections, beginning with the anonymous "Western Wind" and ranging from Sir Walter Raleigh through all the usual "dead white men and Emily Dickinson" to Amy Lowell ("The Taxi"), Langston Hughes (two poems), and Elizabeth Bishop ("In the Waiting Room"). Lawn also includes several "live" white men (James Dickey, Robert Bly, Allen Ginsberg) and, in keeping with her stated aims, women and minority poets such as Gwendolyn Brooks, Anne Sexton, Sharon Olds, and Jimmy Santiago Baca.

Because Lawn has organized her selections chronologically, it is easy to see how poetry, like the short story, developed through time

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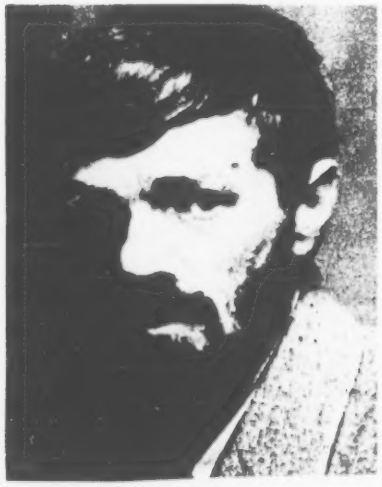
Kennedy's fiction selections provided me with some unexpected pleasures. I ran across a few stories I had read years ago, had been extremely moved by, and then was unable to find again—certainly not in a college anthology. Philip Roth's hilarious "Conversion



of the Jews" is here, as are Willa Cather's short masterpiece "Paul's Case" and D.H. Lawrence's unforgettable "The Rocking Horse Winner." Kennedy has also included many contemporary classics, such as Carv-

is a poet, the poetry section is especially sumptuous. Kennedy invites students to respond to the poems he has chosen first by "Listening to a Voice." Next he asks them to pay attention to individual words (the chapter is subdivided into "Literal Meaning: What a Poem Says First" and "Word Choice and Word Order") and then to listen to what the poet is actually "Saying and Suggesting." Other chapters are organized around concepts such as "Imagery," "Figures of Speech," "Song," "Sound," "Rhythm," "Closed Form and Open Form," "Symbol," and "Myth."

No questions follow the poems. Instead, Kennedy suggests other poems to be compared with the poem under discussion. For example, he directs students' attention to John Crowe Ransom's "Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter" after reading Theodore Roethke's "Elegy for Jane."

The "Further Reading" selections include approximately 150 additional poems from sources as diverse as anonymous ballads, traditional sonnets, and contemporary poets like Linda Pastan and Robert Phillips. All in all, the poetry section contains 439 poems.

The drama section is the skimpiest (if anything 500 pages long can properly be called "skimpy"), mainly because Kennedy has included thirteen full-length plays in addition to some one-acts. The long plays include David Grene's translation of *Oedipus the King*, Shakespeare's *Othello*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*, and August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. They too are grouped around specific concepts, although "Tragedy and Comedy," "The Theater of Shakespeare," and "The Modern Theater" are considerably broader categories than the ones Kennedy examined so brilliantly in fiction and poetry.

As if all this weren't enough, the drama section is followed by another supplement, "Writing." In it Kennedy tells students how

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Like Kennedy's book, Lawn's anthology contains selections from fiction, poetry, and drama. But as Lawn says in her preface, "The only true introduction to literature lies in the reading of literary works of top quality, high interest, and great diversity. The aim in creating *Literature* has been to maintain a constant focus in the minds of instructors and students on that one essential, invigorating experience" (iii).

There are few surprises in this book and little guidance for either instructor or student. Lawn has written introductions to each section that provide an overview of the genre and occasionally a concise, thought-provoking observation. In "Introduction to Fiction," for example, she comments that "modern short stories are usually presented as confidences between narrators and readers" (19). On the following page, she defined point of view as "the lens through which we see the action" and the narrator's tone as "the voice through which we hear it."

But after that, there's nothing but the masterpieces themselves, arranged on the page much the way paintings by the "old masters" are arranged on the bare, blank walls of a museum. No questions for discussion, no essay topics, no biographies, no photographs. Readers are strictly on their own.

In her "Fiction" section Lawn, like Kennedy, includes such perennial teaching favorites as Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown"

itself offers one hundred selections, beginning with the anonymous "Western Wind" and ranging from Sir Walter Raleigh through all the usual "dead white men and Emily Dickinson" to Amy Lowell ("The Taxi"), Langston Hughes (two poems), and Elizabeth Bishop ("In the Waiting Room"). Lawn also includes several "live" white men (James Dickey, Robert Bly, Allen Ginsberg) and, in keeping with her stated aims, women and minority poets such as Gwendolyn Brooks, Anne Sexton, Sharon Olds, and Jimmy Santiago Baca.

Because Lawn has organized her selections chronologically, it is easy to see how poetry, like the short story, developed through time as a specific genre. What is less apparent is what makes a poem a poem—those separate but interlocking components that Kennedy examines so painstakingly.

Lawn has chosen ten plays to represent drama, again arranged chronologically. She invites readers to examine *Oedipus Rex* (the Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald "English version") and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, progresses through Ibsen and Chekhov (his little-known *Marriage Proposal*), and ends with Marsha Norman's *'night, Mother*. Like Kennedy, she has included Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*.

Because Lawn *has* presented the writers in all three genres chronologically, it seems as though her book includes more contemporary women and minority writers than Kennedy's. Maybe so. But because Kennedy's contemporary authors are scattered throughout the book, their impact *as* contemporary writers, *as* minorities, is harder to gauge. And their presence is important to today's students.

Last spring I taught two composition courses using one of the standard textbooks. In both classes, of all the essays in the assigned chapter, I asked my students to read and discuss Martin Luther King's "I had a dream."

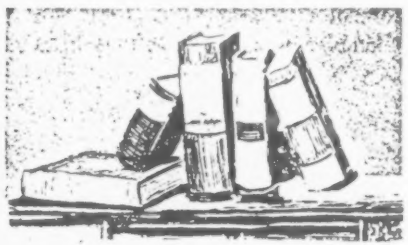
(REVIEWS, Continued on Page 7)

REVIEWS

(Continued from Page 6)

In both classes, a palpable sigh—of delight and of anticipation—swept the room. My students were native Hawaiian, Armenian, Peruvian, Mexican, Columbian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, bikers, and punk rockers—not an African-American among them. What they were responding to was the chance to examine the minority experience. *Any* minority experience.

There are a few errors, omissions, and oddities in both books, probably unavoidable in works of this length (Kennedy's book contains 1572 pages; Lawn's 975). Kennedy misidentifies Canadian short story Alice Munro as Canadian novelist, poet, and short story writer Margaret Atwood (201). Lawn, in her "Glossary of Literary Terms," inexplicably omits "*in medias res*," Horace's still-



valid advice to the writer to immediately plunge his or her characters "into the middle of things." When Lawn discusses poetry, she talks about "rhyme scheme"; Kennedy prefers "rime scheme." Try explaining *that* to your students.

A more serious problem is the writers both Kennedy and Lawn leave out, or slight. Novelists are scarcely mentioned in either anthology (Kennedy does include one long work, Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*). Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" doesn't appear in either anthology, yet surely it illustrates *something* about theme and has *something* to say about

to an instructor than Kennedy's. (It isn't.) And certainly not because it's more comprehensive than Kennedy's. (Kennedy admits in the preface that the book is actually three books: *An Introduction to Fiction*, 5th edition, *An Introduction to Poetry*, 7th edition, and a "text anthology of drama.") But because I do teach at a community college—where one of my students used to bring her little sister because her mother worked nights and couldn't afford a baby-sitter—I would base my decision on which book my students could better afford: there's a nine-dollar difference.

The economy makes pragmatists of us all. I would assign Beverly Lawn's *Literature: 150 Masterpieces* and take my copy of Kennedy's book home to savor in private, waiting for the day I feel justified in asking my students to spend nearly $30 on a single textbook, no matter how outstanding.

☐ Lawn, Beverly, ed. *Literature: 150 Masterpieces of Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. New York: St. Martin's, 1991.

☐ Kennedy, X. J., ed. *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. 5th ed. New York: Harper Collins, 1991.

Joan Fry is the co-author of The Beginning Dressage Book *(Arco, 1981). She has written personality profiles, book reviews, and historical and general interest articles for* Reader's Digest, Los Angeles Times, Westways, Boston Globe, *and other publications. Her interview with novelist John Rechy* (City of Night, The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gomez) *is forthcoming from Poets & Writers. Under the name Jane Mobius, her family name, her short stories have appeared in* Transatlantic Review *and* Confrontation. *More of her short fiction is due out from* North Dakota Quarterly *and* Other Voices. *Fry teaches creative writing at Learning Tree University and composition at Glendale Community College.*

LITERARY THEORY IN LITERATURE CLASSES

by DALLAS E. DILLON
Merced College

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Many teachers of freshman and sopho-

it convincing arguments for a new classroom environment.

It is important to know we *can* practice theory (reader-response, psychoanalytic, Marxist, feminist, deconstructionist, new historicist, multiculturalist, postmodernist) in the classroom; also, though, many of us believe it is equally important to know *why* we can or should practice theory. First, people on either side of the "theory debate" hold political or ideological positions to defend their rhetoric. In short, then, those who profess not to consider theoretical ramifications in their classrooms exert overt, powerful (conservative) political agendas. Those who employ theoretical considerations, on the other hand, cannot mask their politics and really do not wish to do so.

Many of the essays in *Practicing Theory* offer reasons why one uses theory to teach or to explore literature. Note that the essayists in this text do not suggest that we should teach theory itself or theoretical texts aimed at other theorists; rather, they suggest that we can teach literature by way of new, dynamic, compelling considerations—matters that might well reach the students who hope to benefit from our classes.

Most noticeably staunch in "revolutionizing" the literature classroom environment in *Practicing Theory* are Brook Thomas ("The Historical Necessity for—and Difficulties with—New Historical Analysis in Introductory Literature Courses"), Ron Strickland ("Confrontational Pedagogy and the Introductory Literature Classroom"), Barbara Frey Waxman ("Feminist Theory, Literary Canons, and the Construction of Textual Meaning"), Patrick D. Murphy ("Coyote Midwife in the Classroom: Introducing Literature with Feminist Dialogics"), and Douglas Lanier ("Less Is More: Coverage, Critical Diversity, and the Limits of Pluralism"), to name a few.

Downing remind us that the text is a practical guide with which we can discover new ways to reach students, many of whom take our classes grudgingly.

I should note here that the editors who selected the essays are practitioners in the freshman and sophomore English "grind". Although the editors teach in a graduate English program, their loads include introductory composition and literature courses. Thus, the essays they selected serve the purposes of those of us who perform the profession's "unglamorous" duties. The selections do not speak only to other theorists, a charge often leveled at *College English, Critical Inquiry*, and *Diacritics*, etc. Finally, at the close of the text one finds an extremely helpful, extensive bibliographic essay on further resources for theory and pedagogy.

Cahalan and Downing successfully close a gap, of sorts, between (1) teachers of English, those whose primary professional quest is to teach under the burdens of heavy loads, crowded classrooms, and minimal recognition and (2) researchers, those who primarily publish in journals that their "teacher" counterparts rarely have time to read. Perhaps the best way to close the gap, as this book indicates, is to create a middle ground, one in which teachers use the principles often lost in "studying" literary theory. The principles come alive in the classroom, thereby celebrating theory and pedagogy as a vehicle for discovering a clearer focus on professional accomplishments. *Practicing Theory in Introductory College Literature Courses* successfully turns one's attention toward new standards, new paradigms, new methodologies, and new professional wherewithal.

☐ Cahalan, James M. and David B. Downing, eds. *Practicing Theory in Introductory College Literature Courses*. Forthcoming book. Urbana: National Council for Teachers of English.

92

Dallas Dillon has taught freshman and sophomore composition and literature courses for eleven years, the

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But different as they are, these two books, by two different publishers, illustrate what seems to be a growing trend: ever bigger texts (Kennedy's *Literature* weighs in at 3¼ pounds; Lawn's at 2⅛) on thinner paper for more money. The pages of Kennedy's book, in particular, feel like tissue paper and pucker just as easily. Pity the poor student, with her backpack and her four other courses. Pity the poor professor, with a bulging briefcase and a bad back. Pity, in particular, the part-timer, with no office.

If I were teaching an "Introduction to Literature" course at a community college, and I had my choice of one of these texts, I would choose Lawn's. Not because it is more intellectually stimulating than Kennedy's. (It isn't.) Not because it's more helpful

novelist John Rechy (City of Night, The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gomez) *is forthcoming from Poets & Writers. Under the name Jane Mobius, her family name, her short stories have appeared in* Transatlantic Review *and* Confrontation. *More of her short fiction is due out from* North Dakota Quarterly *and* Other Voices. *Fry teaches creative writing at Learning Tree University and composition at Glendale Community College.*

LITERARY THEORY IN LITERATURE CLASSES

by DALLAS E. DILLON
Merced College

Many teachers of freshman and sophomore English have questioned whether contemporary literary theory has a place in the undergraduate classroom. In the last few years, college and university professors have generated responses—in the forms of books, articles, and conferences—to our questions, our doubts, our apprehensions.

Practicing Theory in Introductory College Literature Courses by James Cahalan and David Downing sets out to illustrate how and why many of us can and do utilize the salient qualities found in theory. Indeed, many of us find the pedagogical applications to literature a satisfying endeavor—even in our freshman and sophomore classes, as the book's title suggests. Of course, it would be helpful for the reader to have at least a rudimentary knowledge of the literary theories that have caused furor and bewilderment for the last twenty-five years, but one who is rather ignorant of the subjects can still understand the pedagogical methodologies at work in this anthology. The essays are written on a conversational level, and most clearly and meticulously diagram step by step analyses of theoretical application in an introductory-level classroom. For example, Don Biolostosky explains Bakhtinian dialogics as they apply to poetry discussions in class. Thomas Fink dissects the stages of deconstructive reading in a rather Aristotelian fashion that, ironically, anyone can follow. These two authors, as the other eighteen in the text, exhibit

Practicing Theory are Brook Thomas ("The Historical Necessity for—and Difficulties with—New Historical Analysis in Introductory Literature Courses"), Ron Strickland ("Confrontational Pedagogy and the Introductory Literature Classroom"), Barbara Frey Waxman ("Feminist Theory, Literary Canons, and the Construction of Textual Meaning"), Patrick D. Murphy ("Coyote Midwife in the Classroom: Introducing Literature with Feminist Dialogics"), and Douglas Lanier ("Less Is More: Coverage, Critical Diversity, and the Limits of Pluralism"), to name a few.

However, all twenty essays in *Practicing Theory* prove readable and helpful. How and why theory finds its way into introductory literature courses should prove enlightening, provoking, and challenging—the nature of the esoteric, philosophical stuff of which theory itself is comprised.

Readers will enjoy and appreciate Cahalan and Downing's introduction to the text. The editors introduce the theoretical "models" by way of general overview and by way of introducing the aims of each essayist's proposals. Also, the political aspects of our "new pedagogical imperatives" resonate throughout the introductory remarks. Most importantly, though, is that Cahalan and in "studying" literary theory. The principles come alive in the classroom, thereby celebrating theory and pedagogy as a vehicle for discovering a clearer focus on professional accomplishments. *Practicing Theory in Introductory College Literature Courses* successfully turns one's attention toward new standards, new paradigms, new methodologies, and new professional wherewithal.

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Dallas Dillon has taught freshman and sophomore composition and literature courses for eleven years, the latest five at Merced College. He is currently working on his dissertation. The general topic of the work is theory and pedagogy.

STUDENTS, LITERATURE, AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

by MICHELLE PAGNI
Riverside Community College

Opening Texts: Using Writing to Teach Literature is a good resource for any teacher interested in finding ways to help students learn to work critically and creatively with literature. Kathleen Dudden Andrasick has set out to explore the ways we can train students in critical inquiry through a variety of methods that are "real—that is, with a real communicative purpose and a real audience ready and interested in receiving the communication" (13). Her book gives practical ways to teach literature through varied writing assignments. While accomplishing these assignments at the community college level seems less likely than at the high school level, where teachers have the luxury of working with their students daily, any teacher can find useful applications in Andrasick's book.

Andrasick has organized her book around modules that progress through the writing

(REVIEWS, Continued on Page 18)

READER RESPONSE

(Continued from Page 5)

in order to provide tension within her story, and a Marxist reading of class struggle and change as presented in the story. Because the students had already shared their ideas and feelings in small groups, they were more willing to voice their ideas when I used the discussion-guide questions to begin a larger discussion with the whole class.

DISCUSSION GUIDE 2

The second discussion guide developed as I read Robert E. Probst's *Response and Analysis*. Probst contends that personal response to a text should lead naturally to other critical approaches. He suggests that first we focus on each reader's personal response and that "Interest in other approaches to literature will come, if it comes, from this first step" (9). He notes what we all suspect, that our students' first responses may vary among personal reflections, opinions on topical issues raised in the text, individual interpretations about meaning, and personal appreciation of form and structure (56-60).

After students have read a text for homework, they simply respond to the following prompt: "After reading the poem/story/play, list some of your initial reactions and/or feelings." (Often, I must model this type of freewriting, illustrating what reactions and feeling are; otherwise, not surprisingly, many students simply summarize the text.) Then in order to make them more aware of their own reading processes, they must do one more freewriting: "Take a few of your reactions and explain why you had them. Refer to the text." I hope this encourages them to see reading as a transaction between self and text, "an ongoing process in which the elements of the story, is now ready to participate in a Feminist critique, moving beyond a simple paraphrasing of the plot.

DISCUSSION GUIDE 3

Discussion Guide 3 is very similar to the second one. However, I found that I needed to be more explicit in my directions and more flexible in the types of responses I hoped for or expected. Again after reading a text, students must do a freewriting. This time I ask them to

> Do a freewriting in which you respond to the text. You may want to ask questions, make observations, confirm or reject some of the text's ideas, list emotions, draw a parallel with your own experiences and/or observations, offer advice to one of the characters; however, feel free to write whatever comes to mind.

Once again, modeling my own reaction to a text helps students distinguish between a summary and a reaction. Sometimes, I compare my freewritten response to a summary of the same piece.

After reading H. D.'s "Heat," Qutresa offers an honest reaction expressing her confusion: "What is the poem speaking of? I know she is asking the wind to displace the heat. I can relate to this, but what is the talk of fruit?" Sometimes we are frustrated as we engage a text and feel it is not contributing to the reading. Qutresa's honest reaction allowed me to suggest different formalist strategies for overcoming this initial frustration and for getting into the text, such as analyzing the imagery and diction.

Once again, students are asked to listen to others and once again complete a freewriting that reacts to others' responses. They often find that their classmates offer fresh and different perspectives. Qutresa felt some relief: "Many things were revealed to me while listening to the others in the group. The heat stunting the growth of the fruit and radiated up from the ground, both stifling attributes of heat."

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke wrote, "Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours" (525). If we wish our students to think about what they read, to analyze, to question, to evaluate, and to finally connect literature with their lives, we must allow them to form a primary relationship with the text. The first step in that relationship should be made by them as they informally express their reactions and responses.

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Vincent Piro has previously published articles in inside english *and* California English. *This month, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich will publish* Visions Across the Americas, *which Piro helped edit (along with Sterling Warner, Evergreen Valley College, and Judy Hillard, San Jose State University). At Merced College, where he teaches full-time, Piro is one of the faculty leaders and trainers for the Classroom Assessment Project (LARC/FIPSE).*

RETURN

This is not about the terrified eyes of the boy
who pointed his rifle at our plane,
the drive through Waldenstein forests
to see empty ski resorts

the young man's desperation,

women lined up at empty supermarkets,
driver's grip on my arm.
And no one can explain
the effigy in the closet or why

literature will come, if it comes, from this first step" (9). He notes what we all suspect, that our students' first responses may vary among personal reflections, opinions on topical issues raised in the text, individual interpretations about meaning, and personal appreciation of form and structure (56-60).

After students have read a text for homework, they simply respond to the following prompt: "After reading the poem/story/play, list some of your initial reactions and/or feelings." (Often, I must model this type of freewriting, illustrating what reactions and feeling are; otherwise, not surprisingly, many students simply summarize the text.) Then in order to make them more aware of their own reading processes, they must do one more freewriting: "Take a few of your reactions and explain why you had them. Refer to the text." I hope this encourages them to see reading as a transaction between self and text, "an ongoing process in which the elements or factors are, one might say, aspects of a total situation, each conditioned by and conditioning one another" (Rosenblatt, *Reader, Text, Poem* 17).

Courtney's respose to August Wilson's *Fences* reflects her own current conflicts with her mother. After commenting that she found the relationship between Troy and Cory frustrating, she writes, "My mom and I just had a huge conflict this last week—when I came home and said I was gonna go over a friend's house. She said no and I felt like she had no reason to tell me to stay home." Courtney is beginning to realize that reading is a process in which the text and the reader create meaning together; she is starting to understand that her own experiences combine with the plot, theme, words, and structure of the text to create a reading.

The next day in class students share these responses with their classmates and then do one more freewriting, answering the following questions: What were the other reactions in the group? Why did others have their reactions? Did any of the other reactions surprise you? Which ones and why? By hearing the reading-responses of others, my students often remain open-minded to different possible reactions, interpretations, and appreciations and more aware of the subjectivity of their own responses. As Rosenblatt writes, "A free exchange of ideas will lead each student to scrutinize his own sense of the literary work in light of other's opinions" (*Literature as Exploration* 110).

After reading Colette's short story "The Hand," Alejandro was startled: "Two of the responses surprised me because they thought the story was about male dominance over women. But after thinking about it, I understand how they came to this conclusion because of the strong hand and what that could mean." Alejandro, who had done basically a summary

Once again, students are asked to listen to others and once again complete a freewriting that reacts to others' responses. They often find that their classmates offer fresh and different perspectives. Qutresa felt some relief: "Many things were revealed to me while listening to the others in the group. The heat stunting the growth of the fruit and radiated up from the ground, both stifling attributes of heat."

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke wrote, "Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of

---. *The Reader, The Text, The Poem*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.

Vincent Piro has previously published articles in inside english *and* California English. *This month, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich will publish* Visions Across the Americas, *which Piro helped edit (along with Sterling Warner, Evergreen Valley College, and Judy Hillard, San Jose State University). At Merced College, where he teaches full-time, Piro is one of the faculty leaders and trainers for the Classroom Assessment Project (LARC/FIPSE).*

RETURN

This is not about the terrified eyes of the boy
who pointed his rifle at our plane,
the drive through Waldenstein forests
to see empty ski resorts,
nor is it about the young man
who begged me to marry him, help him escape.
I was not in Romania to write about my Zada,
born a country away, buried an ocean away.
What was he doing there on the curb,
the unbugged sanctuary where I sat
with guide and driver, argued politics?

Two weeks in Bucharest—
Drizzle, crab apple blossoms dressed a gray city.
My assignment: to report on
so-called life-prolonging treatments;
massages, bee pollen, herbal baths, procaine.
The drug taken by mouth agitated.
The drug injected evoked a sea-voyage
to Brooklyn, to shul—the cantor's wail—
the women upstairs reeking of perfume,
Zada's hug, delighted chuckle,
when I ran downstairs to davin.

I want to write about Chanukah,
dreidels and latkes. My hand stiffens.
I open the wrong closet, dolls—
A black Didy cried when squeezed,
wet when turned over, a fat Chuckles
with bitten fingers; a red-haired Toni,
wig torn off; a doll stuck with pins?

I talk incessantly about Romania;
as if I'd never crossed a border,
as if the cocaine-like substance
had permanently loosened my tongue.
But no amount of chatter clarifies
the young man's desperation,

women lined up at empty supermarkets,
driver's grip on my arm.
And no one can explain
the effigy in the closet or why
this fragrant earth belongs to Satan.

I don't speak of locked ghetto gates,
elegant, black, wrought iron,
synagogue and holocaust museum
I couldn't visit, Rabbi unavailable.
Nor do I reveal the way Zada materialized
to disrupt the prayers of the babushkaed woman
in the church where I went to admire icons.
I haven't recounted his last tale—
soldiers on horseback, split skulls—
Sometimes I see him, a young man
with thick dark hair, crouched beneath
the kitchen table in the small Russian town
of his nativity. I offer gratitude
that he killed his Cossack.

I miss pastrami lunches at his factory,
machines' thrum, medley of Yiddish and Spanish,
travelogues of broom peddling,
wonder at journeys without papers.
I celebrate, listen to a friend
read the story of lights to children
who have never starved or seen
someone they love taken away,
feel nostalgia for grape fights with cousins,
smell the Raggedy Baba kept for me,
imagine myself in Zada's lap again.

NANCY SHIFFRIN

On leave from Los Angeles City College, Nancy Shiffrin is teaching private writing workshops and working on her own poetry writing. "Return" is from a newly completed manuscript that Shiffrin hopes will be published soon.

FROM STORY TO POETRY

Using Ballads to Bridge the Genres

by MADELINE LOEWE PUCCIONI
Los Medanos College

A TREE, A ROCK, A CLOUD
—A BALLAD

It was a dark and rainy morning
When he set foot inside the bar
to deliver to a boy his warning
of a love that went too far

He loved a woman fiercely
though he'd known her but three days
his pleasure ran so loosely
he felt lost under her gaze

She left him one cold evening
He could never be the same
So he followed her unceasing
In his sleep he wept her name.

He learned about love finally
after five long years
to love is to live peacefully
and forget about the tears

"Concentrate your love, my son
On some kind and simple thing
then shed your love on everyone
and let your love flap its own wings."

—Anastasia Kolda[1]

You're teaching English 2, Intro to Lit, and you've chosen an anthology that leaps, as many do, from short stories to poetry about six weeks into the semester. Oh, yes, you've introduced poetic terms—image, simile, metaphor, analogy, etc., etc.—but the form on the page has been *story*—problem, conflict, crisis, resolution. Plot, in short. Character. Protagonist. Antagonist. "The Open Boat," "The Worn Path," "A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud." *Story*, not Poem.

What's the difference between a story and

Do you think he actually gets up and walks out?

That's what I hate about poetry.

Nothing happens.

And when it does happen you never know if it really does. Or why.

Maybe what happens in a poem isn't always what's important?

We chew on that one awhile, getting different ideas about what a poem is *good* for, anyway, hacking away at the emotion, the message, the reason Whitman HAD to write this poem: Nobody writes poems unless he/she HAS to. Do you think they do it for money? For their health? To get on "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous?"

Something about education, here. Something about how you can listen to yourself, not some guy standing up in front of you and telling you about things. Something about the "perfect silence" in the last line . . . and all the noise in the first part. Applause, lecture. That stuff. There's more: We get into Whitman's philosophy; his lifestyle a bit; the Civil War poems; how he served as a medic; stayed with young men, Blue and Grey alike, and bandaged them and held their hands and prayed for peace as they lay dying.

A poem, they decide, expresses intense emotion, usually in a rhyme or some rhythmic way, which approximates good old Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman's definition pretty closely. Students are amused to hear Holman's caveat, and agree: "A formal definition of poetry is, of course, impossible. It means different things to different people at different times" (Holman 399).

I then read them several attempts to define poetry, including Robinson's, Shelley's, and Wordsworth's, and we see that even some major poets had a tough time with this one: to sing, I modestly refuse. What does a ballad look like? Why did people sing ballads? What does a ballad do that's different from, say, "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer"?

It makes sense, someone mutters.

By the time the class ends they've decided that a ballad tells a story, that it is written in four line stanzas that rhyme, that it usually has a refrain or chorus, and that it always uses some kind of repetition. Enough to go on.

For next Monday, let's see what you can come up with.

I was pardonably pleased with the results. Many of the students seemed, like Ana Kolda, to succeed at combining story elements with poetic elements and to learn something about each form as they created a ballad.

Here's another of my favorites, one I read (not sang) in class:

Bartleby the scrivener was a strange man

At first it was all work
then all he would ever say
Is "I'd prefer not to, today."

When I looked him in the eye
And again I'd ask him why
He'd just stare at me and say
"I'd prefer not to, today."

I then came to the conclusion
That he was under a strange delusion
I told him he must work, too!
Again, he said, "I'd prefer not to."

I told him he must quit
I told him he had no choice
But in response he voiced
"I'd prefer not to."
I told him he must quit

(STORY TO BALLAD, Continued on Page 12)

Explore & Discover

TESOL '92

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On some kind and simple thing
then shed your love on everyone
and let your love flap its own wings."

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What's the difference between a story and a poem? you ask your class hopefully. Squirms and soulful gazing out the window. A story tells a story, you hear. Something happens; somebody has a problem, and he has to do something about it. Something *happens*.

Well, okay, doesn't something *happen* in a poem? Let's take a look at today's semi-readable purple handout. "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer." Walt Whitman.

Uncle Waltie, as Robin Williams (Mr. Keating) calls him in *Dead Poets Society*. What happens in this poem? Coughs and squirms. Ten points! What happens in this poem? Dutifully, they read it through. Well?

Not much. It's pretty boring, actually. Well, a guy is sitting there listening to a lecture on astronomy and he gets tired of it and he gets up and leaves and goes out and looks at the stars.

War poems, how he served as a medic, stayed with young men, Blue and Grey alike, and bandaged them and held their hands and prayed for peace as they lay dying.

A poem, they decide, expresses intense emotion, usually in a rhyme or some rhythmic way, which approximates good old Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman's definition pretty closely. Students are amused to hear Holman's caveat, and agree: "A formal definition of poetry is, of course, impossible. It means different things to different people at different times" (Holman 399).

I then read them several attempts to define poetry, including Robinson's, Shelley's, and Wordsworth's, and we see that even some major poets had a tough time with this one: "Poetry is language that tells us, through a more or less emotional reaction, something that cannot be said. All poetry, great or small, does this." (Edwin Arlington Robinson).

Could you write a story about "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer"? I ask.

Groans and squishing of eyebrows. They see an assignment coming. A chorus of "No's!"

How 'bout this one. We turn to the ballads, read "Lord Randall My Son" aloud. I venture to sing one, well, okay, two verses. Like many ex-folkies, I have found *classes* to inflict my Joan Baez interpretations upon.

Could you write a story about "Lord Randall My Son"?

For extra credit?

Yes, because it's a story already, is the consensus. The mother asks her dying son what happened, and he says his girlfriend poisoned him. Like *Sea of Love*; Al Pacino thinks his girlfriend has murdered somebody and is setting him up, too.

Is that the assignment? Go see *Sea of Love*?

Glad you asked.

More groans. Write a story about a ballad?

Just the opposite. Take one of the stories you really liked and see if you can write a *ballad* about *it*.

More groans.

We discuss the ancient origin of ballads, read a few more, and though they beg me

Explore & Discover

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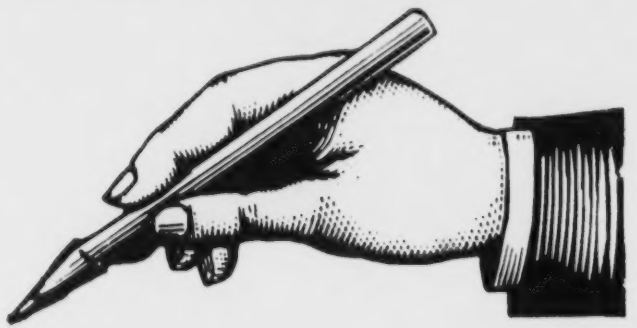
ECCTYC'S 1991 STATEWIDE CONFERENCE

Teaching English in the Nineties: The Concerns and Challenges of Our Profession

Over 170 California community college English faculty attended ECCTYC'S 1991 Statewide Conference, held 24-26 October, at the Horton Grand Hotel in San Diego. In addition to the twenty-two sessions covering topics as diverse as "Chicano Literature" and "Using Autobiography," "The Student as Evaluator" and "Critical Thinking at the Movies," participants enjoyed other activities: a breakout session for department chairs: an open poetry reading; a luncheon presentation by Diane Sinor, Education Director of the Old Globe Theater in San Diego; book displays and delicious hors d'oeuvres courtesy of Allyn & Bacon, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, HarperCollins, D.C. Heath, Houghton Mifflin, and Prentice Hall; and a provocative closing address by Constance Carroll, President of Saddleback College.

Because of requests from the attendees, two extra sessions were added: a follow-up to the presentation "It Started with Eve: Reading the Bible as Feminist Literature" and an open forum to discuss the IGETC critical thinking/composition requirement—courses that meet that requirement, its impact on Introduction to Literature courses, and what various colleges are doing about it. ECCTYC was asked to consider at its next board meeting taking a position on two issues: 1) that despite IGETC interpretations of them, traditional English 1B courses actually *do* teach critical thinking, though it is not necessarily critical thinking as defined by philosophy departments; and 2) that non-English faculty lack appropriate training and education to *instruct* composition, as the IGETC requirement demands, but that they should be encouraged to *assign* and *evaluate* writing in all their classes. Many attending the session urged English faculty to become pro-active in making literature a required General Education course.

Below are summaries of fourteen of the sessions. Longer articles based on several of the presentations will appear in future issues of *i.e.*.



"ASSERTIVE SCRIPTS": A STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULT STUDENTS

JANET PORTOLAN, Dean of Humanities at Fullerton College, presented a strategy for effectively dealing with difficult students. She opened with a working definition of assertiveness: "expressing what you believe, feel, and want in direct, honest, appropriate ways that respect the rights of the other person." The key word is *appropriate*. Aggressive response is too much, too soon, or too late; non-assertive is too little, too late, or never. In choosing the assertive option, we solve the problem while still feeling good about the other person and about ourselves.

When employing any strategy, we must first ask ourselves, "Is this really worth my time and effort?" If it is and we care to work on a solution, then, Portolan suggests, we can do the following:

b. Express your feeling or reaction: "I feel . . . towards this behavior."
c. Specify the behavior you prefer: "I would prefer . . . ."
d. Pose the positive and negative consequences: "If you don't . . . . If you do . . . ." This is not a threat but just a piece of information.

Of course, we must be willing to follow through with the consequences, or the script is worthless. Also, there should be a definite time limit on the results.

Portolan then mentioned "Ten Do's and Don't's" to promote non-defensive communication, taken from Theodora Wells' *Keeping Your Cool Under Fire*. These and the sample scripts are available in handouts that Portolan will make available upon request.

WRITING TO LEARN AND LEARNING TO WRITE: PAIRING BASIC WRITING COURSES

At Mt. San Antonio College, as at most colleges, students ordinarily register for a discrete section of the pre-English 1A course. MARGIE WHALEN, GARY ENKE, and RALPH SPAULDING, however, decided to pair their sections: one with history, one with sociology, and one with philosophy. To develop the history and English instructors have created a common syllabus. The students read primary sources, documents of the period under study, and write about these in their journals. Here, the students write on real college material and get immediately into the subject.

The instructors report that the students have

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Scheduled back to back, the sociology and English class each has its own syllabus. Each week in English, students write in their journals on subjects and concepts studied in sociology and get help in understanding sociological concepts. As a final exam, the students watch the film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, analyzing it from a sociological point of view.

In the philosophy and English pair, both instructors have taught both subjects and switch between the two, sometimes lecturing to each other's class. The writing assigments are based on philosophical questions raised in the introductory course; and World Religions (Philosophy 15) uses relevant novels.

Because both are certified in both subjects, the history and English instructors have created a common syllabus. The students read primary sources, documents of the period under study, and write about these in their journals. Here, the students write on real college material and get immediately into the subject.

The instructors report that the students have come together as a group, something that doesn't happen in separate courses that tend to teach subjects in isolation. In addition, students are involved in real college-level work as they learn the paired subject by writing about it in the English class.

GORDON TAYLOR
Yuba College

She opened with a working definition of assertiveness: "expressing what you believe, feel, and want in direct, honest, appropriate ways that respect the rights of the other person." The key word is *appropriate*. Aggressive response is too much, too soon, or too late; non-assertive is too little, too late, or never. In choosing the assertive option, we solve the problem while still feeling good about the other person and about ourselves.

When employing any strategy, we must first ask ourselves, "Is this really worth my time and effort?" If it is and we care to work on a solution, then, Portolan suggests, we can do the following:

1. Decide what we want as an outcome.
2. Let the other person know that we hear him/her and are interested in the problem.
3. Follow the steps of an "assertive script":
   a. Describe the situation or behavior while being objective, simple, and concrete. Focus on behavior, not on the person: "When you . . . ."
   b. Specify the behavior you prefer: "I would prefer . . . ."
   d. Pose the positive and negative consequences: "If you don't . . . . If you do . . . ." This is not a threat but just a piece of information.

Of course, we must be willing to follow through with the consequences, or the script is worthless. Also, there should be a definite time limit on the results.

Portolan then mentioned "Ten Do's and Don't's" to promote non-defensive communication, taken from Theodora Wells' *Keeping Your Cool Under Fire*. These and the sample scripts are available in handouts that Portolan will make available upon request. She urged us to take a risk to produce a positive outcome. Students and faculty both have rights to be respected, and this strategy may well help maintain that mutual respect while promoting non-defensive communication and objectively negotiating a solution.

BILL DECKER
College of the Sequoias

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR PROGRAM CHANGE

LUE COBENE and CAROLE STAHLKOPF (Solano College) spoke about the problems they encountered while working on a committee to design a course to satisfy a multicultural General Education requirement. Though all seemed to agree in spirit with incorporating cultural diversity into the college curriculum, the problem of defining "culture" caused friction between those for whom "culture" could not include any consideration of the broad spectrum of many ethnic groups, gender, sexual orientation, or disability and those for whom "culture" included as much diversity as possible; between those who viewed substituting "cultural" for "ethnic" diversity as a white power play designed to deflect any serious consideration of discrimination against African Americans and Hispanics and those who saw the term "ethnic diversity" as an African American/Hispanic power play designed to limit any serious consideration of sources. Others argued that gender and sexual orientation cannot be considered part of cultural diversity.

Although many left the committee, with help from experts like Suzanne Brooks of the CSU Sacramento Multi-Cultural Center and an AACJC/NEH grant to give the project validation, those remaining have developed a course that focuses not on a product but on process—how perception and its influence on action/reaction develops the appreciation of one's own culture and of those cultures that one perceives as different.

Believing that all language difficulties are integrated, VIRGINIA WAGNER and CHERYL HOWARD (Mendocino College) developed a "whole language" pre-collegiate program. Reading and writing classes are linked; reading and writing labs are not discipline specific, but support reading and writing activities across the curriculum.

Wagner and Howard also changed Mendocino's assessment test from a computerized one to a writing sample, a form of testing that integrates reading comprehension and writing assessment. [When the writing sample was first instituted, over 50 percent of the students taking it did not pass. This fact convinced the administration to support the whole language developmental program.] To meet the new criteria for assessment, Mendocino is now trying to validate the test. The instructors believe that such testing models what we want students to do all through the curriculum; it demonstrates the integration and the interdependence of reading and writing.

BARBARA BILSON WOODRUFF
Santa Monica College

INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE IN THE 1990s: RECONSIDERING CANON, PEDAGOGY, AND CRITICAL THEORY

DALLAS DILLON (Merced College) opened with a discussion of critical theory in undergraduate English classes. [See "Literary Theory in Literature Classes," p. 7.] As teachers of literature, we need to empower the students. We should teach them how to teach themselves rather than to (1) look to the teacher/actor in a lecture-based class to give them the keys to wisdom, (2) gear their learning to studying for the "big test," or (3) write only in conformity to the style of the teacher.

Dillon believes we need a new critical theory to assure that students are not intimidated by the text nor awed by the teacher's knowledge as he or she explains the meaning of the literature to them. He raised the question: Are students, sitting there with their mouths open, really in awe of the teacher, or are they just daydreaming? We must teach students to challenge authority *and* the text. Classroom activity should include not just reading, but rereading. "To read is to write is to read is to write."

Deconstruction, Dillon believes, attacks the use of a single approach to a text. He illustrated this concept by explaining his approach to a classroom discussion of Blake's "A Sick Rose." He encourages students to "investigate, evaluate, create" by asking "How do you feel about the poem?" rather than "What does the poem mean?"

MARK NICOLL-JOHNSON (Merced College) addressed the status of the canon, pointing out that its existence is not new. [See "Rethinking the Canon," p. 1.] He insisted that it is not nor should not be monolithic. Recalling Dillon's comment on the canon—"We could, one, extend it; two, open it; three, throw it out"—Nicoll-Johnson discarded the notion that the canon would be thrown out, but demonstrated how it can be extended and opened. In discussing what he called a "canon/commonplace book," Nicoll-Johnson suggested that we seek a methodology of critical reading.

VINCE PIRO (Merced College) concluded the session with a focus on pedagogy. [See "Reader Response Theory," p. 5.] He asked that we create not a "teacher-centered, but a student-centered discipline." Piro believes that the best learning occurs when speaking, listening, writing, and reading are taking place simultaneously. The text must be an active element in the class and remain as active as the reader.

To encourage personal engagement from his students as they encounter a text, Piro uses a series of discussion guides that ask not "What does the poem (play, story) mean?" but rather "What does the poem (play, story) do?" Although at times his students would not commit themselves to an opinion, when they did, those ideas were their own, not echoes of the teacher's.

KEN COONEY
Shasta College

MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE: WHAT TO USE AND HOW TO USE IT

MICHAEL DINIELLI (Chaffey College), whose experience includes years of teaching in Europe and Japan, established the foundation for the presentations on the rich variety of multicultural literature by discussing the growing population of minority students on the campuses of California community colleges and the necessity both to serve those students with literature from their own cultures as well as to acquaint and sensitize other students and faculty to cultures other than their own. Dinielli also provided a bibliography of works from Asian and Asian-American writers.

JESUS GONZALES (Ventura College) focused on Chicano and Chicana authors. He distributed an annotated bibliography, commenting on and highlighting works from it. He noted a strong difference between Chicano and Chicana writers, recommending, for example, Denise Chavez's novel *Last of the Menu Girls* as "a story with which any woman can identify: babysitting, the first job, shopping, college, boyfriend."

TERRY FERGUSON (Taft College) explained how she uses multicultural novels, especially those by African Americans, in developmental composition classes. Her methods include reading chapters of the assigned novels aloud to her classes and having students write about and discuss in groups their reactions to the novels, especially how the events and characters relate to their own lives and cultures. She also distributed a bibliography of multicultural novels, emphasizing African-American works.

JERRY HERMAN
Laney College

SHARING THE MAGIC: USING FANCIFUL LITERATURE IN DEVELOPMENTAL

INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHING

Presenters and audience were (metaphorically) en route to the airport midway through this session, as the five speakers shared their recent experiences in a variety of programs and parts of the world and revealed that for them and their students overseas teaching was one of life's highlights. As they talked, they rekindled their own resolve to do it all over again as soon as possible.

DOROTHY BERGER (San Diego Mesa College) told of her two terms as a teacher of English to highly selected Chinese students at the Guangzhou Institute of Foreign Languages in Guangzhou, China. Living in on-campus housing, she taught students who were eager and able and would become China's English-speaking professionals.

DON PIERSTORFF (Orange Coast College) had contracted with private industry to write technical manuals and teach English to make Western technology accessible in Saudi Arabia. After living and working with his Arab hosts, Pierstorff felt a particular urgency for teachers to experience the Middle East for themselves.

ANNETTE FRUEHAN (Orange Coast College) spent her summer as a guest of the Taiwan government, teaching mature, Eng-

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JERRY HERMAN
Laney College

SHARING THE MAGIC: USING FANCIFUL LITERATURE IN DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING CLASSES

PATRICIA ROSS (Moorpark College) shared ideas for using fanciful literature with developmental students (about two levels below Freshman Composition). Examples included Norton Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth*, for its reading simplicity and word play that weak readers can enjoy, and Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron," for its power to stimulate students' imagination.

Participants also shared literary works they find effective in developmental courses, including the fairy tales of Jack Sipes in *Don't Bet on the Prince* and Angela Carter's *Bloody Chamber*.

Consensus was that fanciful literature can stimulate developmental students to write fairy tales of their own, haiku-like images, thoughtful reactions to what they read, and recommendations to other students about "good books" to enjoy. Ross said that some students expressed pride in having read their first "whole book."

HELEN GORDON
Bakersfield College

FLIGHTS OF THE SELF: THE ESCAPES OF RICHARD RODRIGUEZ AND JAMES JOYCE

PATRICK LYNCH (El Camino College) explained the title of his presentation, which focused on his use of Joyce's *Dubliners* and Rodriguez's *Hunger of Memory* in Freshman English, this way: each of these writers is in flight from some aspects of the culture they grew up in, and these texts reveal ways in which they explore that flight in order to discover the self. Lynch uses a rich variety of techniques—clustering, free writing, journal writing, reading aloud, and several variations on the dialectical journal—to engage his students in these complex and demanding texts. Discussions of the two writers' epiphanies lead students to write on one of their own "moments in which things or people in the world [reveal] their true character or essence."

Both the pairing of Joyce and Rodriguez and the risky choice of two demanding, controversial writers aroused lively discussion among the participants. Several expressed strong reservations about Rodriguez being seen as a representative of Chicano culture. Lynch explained that he does not approach the work that way. Students have already read *Dubliners* and numerous selections from *Emerging Voices* before taking up *Hunger of Memory* late in the course.

A lively, informative discussion ensued about Rodriguez, Joyce, and questions of whether composition texts should be chosen on the basis of modeling (good writing, sound values) or on their usefulness in provoking debate. Many felt the latter stimulates students to more engaged and engaging writing.

JOHN LOVAS
De Anza College

at the Guangzhou Institute of Foreign Languages in Guangzhou, China. Living in on-campus housing, she taught students who were eager and able and would become China's English-speaking professionals.

DON PIERSTORFF (Orange Coast College) had contracted with private industry to write technical manuals and teach English to make Western technology accessible in Saudi Arabia. After living and working with his Arab hosts, Pierstorff felt a particular urgency for teachers to experience the Middle East for themselves.

ANNETTE FRUEHAN (Orange Coast College) spent her summer as a guest of the Taiwan government, teaching mature, English-proficient students who expected soon to be in the United States for education or work. In a compressed term, she and her colleagues participated intensely in the academic and social lives of their students.

BARBARA BILSON WOODRUFF (Santa Monica College) relived her two experiences teaching in Guildford, England, with the Santa Monica College Semester Abroad program. In both instances, she, two colleagues, and group of forty-some students (who lived with families) steeped themselves in the rich context of the literature they were reading and the art, philosophy, history, and music they were studying.

BILL GLASSMAN (Fullerton College) lifted us all into our seats on the airplane with his rendition of time spent wonderfully in Florence, Rome, and Paris with the Fullerton College European Studies Abroad program, teaching literature and opera amid the riches of those cultures.

From the five presentations we learned about overseas program options, living situations, and teaching experiences, but mainly we learned that we wanted to go—NOW.

MURIEL DAVIS
San Diego Mesa College

(ECCTYC CONFERENCE, Continued on Page 16)

STORY TO BALLAD

(Continued from Page 9)

I told him he had no choice
But in response he voiced
"I'd prefer not to."

He still would not leave
I'm sorry to say
That I left him one day
But he still preferred to stay

They finally took him away
And finally one day
He could no longer say
"I'd prefer not to, today."

—Robert Salvo

And this powerful rendition of "The Lottery":

It's a day no one would want to miss
With as much importance as Christmas
The black box, pile of stones, the Lottery
Tradition!

Adams, Bentham, Graves, the names
were many
Harbut, Hutchinson, Warner, and
finally Zanini
Change was difficult, but this was easy
Tradition!

"Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon,"
Old Man Warner said
"It isn't fair!" "It isn't fair!" as a stone
hit her head
The crowd around her was endless,
and soon she lay dead
Tradition!

—Gary Dowell

Of course, some of the papers missed the mark: an interesting interpretation of "Gooseberries" rambled on for several pages, more in prose than in balladic form. But with a little re-writing, most students found they had created a "singable" ballad and learned something about poetry in the process. As an old "folkie," I couldn't resist the opportunity to write the "Ballad of A Good Man Is Hard To Find":

(Refrain)
Lookin' for a good man
So hard to find
Good man so hard to find
Let me tell you, grandma
Can't find a man who's good and kind

. . .

The misfit he's been standin' by
Waitin' for her all the time
"See can you fix the car," says he
Same time, he pulls out a .43
Granma opens up her eyes
"Why, you're the Misfit," she cries
"Better for you all," says he
"If granma hadn't of reckernized me."
The Misfit he is unimpressed
By her lies or Navy dress
Shoots her three times in the head
Cleans his glasses when she's dead.

Oh, a good man is hard to find
Good man is hard to find
Let me tell you, grandma
Hard to find a man who's good and
kind.

And yes, I sang it in class, amid giggles and guffaws. But I'll spare you. This time.

NOTE

[1]Thanks to Ana Kolda, Gary Dowell, and Robert Salvo for permission to use their ballads in this article.

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Madeline Puccioni had several plays produced in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Auckland, New Zealand, and is working on a film script about Lola Montez.

ALL NIMSY . . .

(Continued from Page 3)

But so, too, does Nims when he uses *wordplay* and *metaphor* audaciously to describe his mistress' palms as "bulls in china, burs in linen." If she can't confidently drive a car, she expertly manoeuvres "In traffic of wit." *Simile* and *hyperbole* contribute further to his unorthodox descriptions of the driver's "Shrinking from far headlights pale as a dime," or functioning as "A wrench in clocks and the solar system." Students enjoy identifying the expressions from which Nims departs and seeing cliché converted to fresh use.

Nims' images are unique and resist tidy explication, as the madly gesticulating student discovers when he tries to explain those hands "shipwreck[ing] vases," or "coffee spreading on . . . flannel," or "lipstick grinning on . . . coat." Other devices and techniques abound; the poem also contains *apostrophe, alliteration* to stand for big wholes.

Perhaps you need to be as prone as I am to kissing friends' lapels or tripping over classroom wastebaskets to know a real love poem when you read it. But our students are longing for the kind of acceptance eulogized in this "Love Poem," and they embrace Nims' theme as one of the joys in studying the poem.

My shot here won't kill Shakespeare or Pope, or wound anyone else in the standard canon from Auden to Yeats. Unfortunately, it won't even nick Marvell, as he tenaciously admires his coy mistress' breasts. My plug won't wing the new challengers to the canon, Angelou to Zamora, either. But even though the poet's name isn't Frederika Nimendez, his "Love Poem" keeps a place in my syllabus and in my heart, and El Camino's Repro Service is pleased that his poem now has a place in the anthology I use—X.J. Kennedy's *Literature*, 4th edition.

COMMONPLACE BOOK

It's a day no one would want to miss
With as much importance as Christmas
The black box, pile of stones, the Lottery
Tradition!

Adams, Bentham, Graves, the names
were many
Harbut, Hutchinson, Warner, and
finally Zanini
Change was difficult, but this was easy
Tradition!

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(Refrain)
Lookin' for a good man
So hard to find
Good man so hard to find
Let me tell you, grandma
Can't find a man who's good and kind

. . .

The misfit he's been standin' by
Waitin' for her all the time
"See can you fix the car," says he
Same time, he pulls out a .43

Granma opens up her eyes
"Why, you're the Misfit," she cries

COMMONPLACE BOOK

(Continued from Page 4)

in progress at any one time in the same tribe, each differing according to the personality of its keeper.

According to Roger Callahan, one of Lopez's characters, winter counts are "personal views of history, sometimes metaphorical, bearing on a larger tribal history. He spoke of the confusion caused by translators who had tried to force agreement among several winter counts or who mistook mythic time for some other kind of real time." Callahan goes on to say, "As professional historians we have too often subordinated one system to another and forgotten the individual view, the poetic view, which is as close to the truth as the consensus. Or it can be as distant" (61).

Describing Callahan, Lopez writes:

> He taught, he did not write papers. He told the story of people coming up from the Tigris-Euphrates, starting there. Other years he would start in a different place—Olduvai, Afar Valley. Or in Tierra del Fuego with the Onas. He could as easily start in the First World of the Navaho. The point, he told his students, was not this. There was no point. It was a slab of meat. It was a rhythm to dance to. It was a cloak that cut the wind when it blew hard enough to crack your soul. (57)

I submit that in Roger Callahan's method lies the seed for a method that might be usefully employed by college instructors in introduction to literature classes. There are many places to start.

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Mark Nicoll-Johnson teaches developmental writing and has long been concerned about canon reformation.

pressions from which Nims departs and seeing cliché converted to fresh use.

Nims' images are unique and resist tidy explication, as the madly gesticulating student discovers when he tries to explain those hands "shipwreck[ing] vases," or "coffee spreading on . . . flannel," or "lipstick grinning on . . . coat." Other devices and techniques abound; the poem also contains *apostrophe, alliteration, personification,* and, maybe, a *pun* in "wry" music aurally playing with "bourbon." Here are sufficient terms to keep any intro-lit instructor at the board.

But not bored. The theme of the poem is clear to all students: Love means accepting the bad and celebrating the good in the person loved. If this witty, people-loving woman should stop smashing and spilling—that is, her "hands drop white and empty" in death—all of the joys and pleasures, "the toys," in the speaker's life would be obliterated. Beyond merely defining *synecdoche* and *metonymy*, some students realize that the essence of Nims' poem requires small parts

admires his coy mistress' breasts. My plug won't wing the new challengers to the canon, Angelou to Zamora, either. But even though the poet's name isn't Frederika Nimendez, his "Love Poem" keeps a place in my syllabus and in my heart, and El Camino's Repro Service is pleased that his poem now has a place in the anthology I use—X.J. Kennedy's *Literature*, 4th edition.

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Melinda Barth's syllabus includes works of significant form and meaningful theme by such writers as Piercy, Bambara, Sexton, and Kumin, as well as by Shakespeare, Conrad, Faulkner, Joyce, and, of course, John Frederick Nims.

TRADITIONAL LITERATURE IN AN UNTRADITIONAL COMP CLASS

Myths About Convicts, and Vice Versa

by DAN SATTERLEE
Sacramento City College,
Sierra Community College

"I'm in Folsom Prison for Penal Code 187 (Murder, Second Degree). Been down since March of 1982. I got fifteen years to life for use of a gun and five years for a prior prison term. I don't like the Greek myths because the names are alien. If the names were modern, I would deal with them better."[1]

Adams

"Good morning," I said. "My name is Satterlee, and I'm here to teach an English course."

The heavyset guard looked up and announced, "There's a partial lockdown today." He handed me the belt alarm that every teacher in Folsom Prison wears in case of a classroom emergency.

I wondered, "Does that mean I may not have any students today?"

The burly guard shrugged. "One of your students is already in your room now, but it'll probably be a while before the rest gets released—if they get released."

"What happened?" I asked. **115**

"Yesterday, about noon, an inmate was stabbed right outside the Education Building."

"An auspicious start," I said and the guard

"I'm in because of PC 187 (Penal Code 187), which is Second Degree Murder. I'm serving twenty-five years to life. I really want to learn as much as I can to better myself and increase my education. I have enjoyed learning about Greek Mythology, and I find it very fascinating." *Honest Abe*

It was almost ten o'clock before the other fourteen inmates in my class finally trickled in. I introduced myself to them and then told the class that instead of using the usual composition reader we were going to use a book of Greek myths. En masse the students groaned, "Greek myths," and looked at one another as if a luminous saucer from the planet Zorbon had landed in their midst.

"Gentlemen," I explained, "the reason we're going to read Greek myths in this course is that everyone in our culture should be exposed to the timeless stories of the Greeks."

Two black students sat at the table directly in front of me: the thin one on my left raised his arm high in the air. "Yes?" I asked.

"Yeah, my name is Honest Abe," he said, "I don't think my culture is your culture. In fact, I know we come from very different cultures, so don't give me any nonsense about 'our' culture." The other fourteen inmates snickered at this observation.

"What is your culture?" I asked.

"African," he replied, "and proud of it."

His friend, who wore a straw hat, looked at me and declared, "My name is Jefferson, and all I got to say about Honest Abe's statement is, 'right on!'" Again the class chuckled.

"Okay," I said. "Let me ask Abe a question: Abe, is your African culture Bantu? Masai? Dogon? Fali?"

Abe had a goatee and strong white teeth, and he grinned when he said, "Whatever it is, it ain't yours."

fan of baseball and if you enjoy stuffing your face with hamburgers, like I do, then I think you have a modest claim as a participant in what is called 'Western Culture.' And since that is so, it is also my firm belief that you cannot be a truly educated person in Western Culture without having at least an acquaintance with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Greek myths are a direct link to our tradition."

Shaking his thin, high-cheeked face, Honest Abe complained, "I still say it ain't my tradition."

"Myths are everybody's tradition," I replied. "Let me wax philosophic for a moment. Hindu and Buddhist myths view humanity as being sunk in the depths of *avidya*, which is ignorance. The point is to achieve *moksha*, which is release from our narrow obsessions. Release can only be achieved through enlightenment—and ancient India didn't even offer composition courses, so you guys have a real advantage. In ancient Greece Socrates preached the doctrine that we're all prisoners of ignorance, and the whole point of education is to give us the disciplined curiosity that will allow us to smash out of our inner dungeon."

"My dungeon was built by racism, not ignorance," Honest Abe asserted.

"Well," I replied, "whatever the source, I believe that reading myths is one sure way to break out of these limitations which have been placed on us by time and space."

"And by the judge in Federal court in Santa Barbara," noted Honest Abe. The class chuckled.

Even though it was early February, the classroom was very warm, and I thought for a moment how nice it would be to lie down and take a siesta on the floor.

"I was sent to prison because I was a drug addict and ended up stealing for my habit.

plot and an idiotic ending, as do most of the brain-damaging programs on the tube. The Greek patriarchs, for all their apparent love of violence, seemed to have relished a more tragic ending. In fact, the Greeks had a perverse belief that gods will eventually stomp a proud hero into the dust like a hairy cockroach."

FDR quickly noted, "If you want to see big cockroaches, you ought to come to my cell."

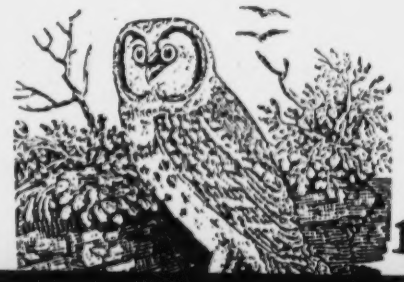
"I found one in my shoe yesterday that was as big as my hand," declared Adams, the osprey with intense brown eyes, and he held up his big knuckled fist.

An inmate with delicate Asian features sat with one leg resting over the other. He had pulled his waist-long, reddish-brown ponytail over his shoulder and was carefully preening it with his fingers. He looked up at me.

"Hey, Teach," he said. "My name is Kennedy and I was wondering if you really hate TV as much as you seem to."

"Yes I do," I replied. "In my humble opinion TV has done more than anything to deflect our nation from education. For instance, a show like *Hunter* is filled with killing, mayhem, car crashes, and lovely but deadly women. This stupidity and violence is calculated to keep the semi-conscious viewer amused. That's all. The Greek myths are full of lust and violence, but these are seen as destructive, both to the individual and society. The myths entertain, but they also enlighten. Not

(MYTHS, Continued on Page 17)



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I wondered, "Does that mean I may not have any students today?"

The burly guard shrugged. "One of your students is already in your room now, but it'll probably be a while before the rest gets released—if they get released."

"What happened?" I asked.

"Yesterday, about noon, an inmate was stabbed right outside the Education Building."

"An auspicious start," I said and the guard showed me to my classroom. It was narrow, maybe twelve feet wide, and thirty feet deep. Six rectangular tables with four chairs each were crowded together in the middle of the room. Thick wooden cabinets made the room seem even smaller than it was. The inmate who was not locked down glanced up at me from his table as I set my briefcase on the desk top.

"Morning," I said. "We may or may not have class."

The convict introduced himself as Adams. He had woolly porkchop sideburns, a droopy Fu Manchu mustache, and hairy brows. He wore the inmate uniform: sneakers, denim trousers, and a blue, long sleeved shirt. As was the fashion both inside and outside of Folsom, he had buttoned the top button of his shirt. He perched on the forward third of his chair and clenched his knees with his big hands. With his intense brown eyes gaping wide, he surveyed me from head to toe. Instantly, I was reminded of an osprey about to tear into a halibut.

I asked him, "Do you know if the guy who got stabbed is dead?"

"I heard he's hurt bad, but he ain't dead. Hey, man, are we gonna get paper and pens today?"

"I don't know," I answered and glanced at my Casio watch. It was 8:26.

I don't think my culture is your culture. In fact, I know we come from very different cultures, so don't give me any nonsense about 'our' culture." The other fourteen inmates snickered at this observation.

"What is your culture?" I asked.

"African," he replied, "and proud of it."

His friend, who wore a straw hat, looked at me and declared, "My name is Jefferson, and all I got to say about Honest Abe's statement is, 'right on!'" Again the class chuckled.

"Okay," I said. "Let me ask Abe a question: Abe, is your African culture Bantu? Masai? Dogon? Fali?"

Abe had a goatee and strong white teeth, and he grinned when he said, "Whatever it is, it ain't yours."

"Then let me ask you another question: Do you like football?"

'Yep. The 49'ers are my team."

"Do you like baseball?"

"Sure do. The Oakland A's are my team."

"Do you like to make phone calls?"

"I sure do, whenever the fascists who run this place let me."

"Do you believe in taking antibiotics when you're sick?"

Honest Abe nodded his thin face. "Yeah. So what?"

"Maybe antibiotics saved your life. Now, do you like hamburgers?"

"With cheese and smeared with onions, and placed lovingly between sesame seed buns with juicy tomatoes and dripping with teriyaki sauce." The class hooted in delight at this poetic description.

"Abe," I asked, "do you like cars?"

"What fool wouldn't like cars?"

"Some people prefer bikes," I pointed out. "Anyway, do you believe in democracy?"

Honest Abe sneered and said, "There ain't no democracy in America."

"That may be true, but do you like the idea of people determining their own political fate?"

"I suppose so."

"Good," I said and paused to get my breath. "In my humble opinion, if you are a willing allow us to smash out of our inner dungeon."

"My dungeon was built by racism, not ignorance," Honest Abe asserted.

"Well," I replied, "whatever the source, I believe that reading myths is one sure way to break out of these limitations which have been placed on us by time and space."

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Even though it was early February, the classroom was very warm, and I thought for a moment how nice it would be to lie down and take a siesta on the floor.

"I was sent to prison because I was a drug addict and ended up stealing for my habit. The nature of my crimes for the prison term were First Degree Burglary, Grand Theft Auto, and four counts of probation violation. There were a few other charges that were dropped because I took a deal. I have never read Greek mythology before, but I have found it to be very likable reading with a lot of insights."

FDR

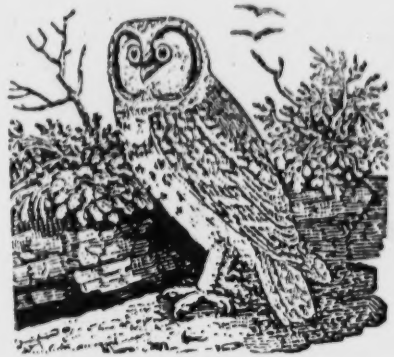
A blond haired, blue-eyed inmate spat a gob of tobacco juice into the trash can he had placed by his leg. He resembled one of the self-portraits by Van Gogh I had seen in a biography about that tragic artist. The inmate wiped some juice from his mustache and raised his hand.

"Yes," I said.

"Hey, Teach, my name is FDR. Last year I had a history teacher, and she said that Greek myths are just a bunch of poems that celebrate rape, war, and patriarchal brawls."

"In some ways she's right," I agreed. "Strength and skill in war are common attributes of many of the hairy-chested Greek heroes. However, if you look closely at the myths, you'll notice that one of the recurrent themes is that life is at best an unsolvable mystery, in fact, often a tragedy, even for celebrated thugs like Jason or Achilles. This is a very different world view from ours, which has been thoroughly infected by TV. Each episode of *Who's the Boss?* has a simplistic plot that's all. The Greek myths are full of lust and violence, but these are seen as destructive, both to the individual and society. The myths entertain, but they also enlighten. Not

(MYTHS, Continued on Page 17)



FOUR HAIKU

Spider's filigree,
Adorned at dawn with dew,
Trembling, trembling so . . .

A glowworm stirs,
Sheds light, while in the distance—
Silent lightning

On the road, a crow,
It lifts itself to twilight . . .
Oh phoenix on fire!

Snowflakes falling.
Surrounding sounds have ceased.
Snow on my shoulder . . .

WALTER J. DUDEK

Walter Dudek has been teaching at Fullerton College for the past twenty-six years. In addition to his usual duties of teaching Preparation for College Writing and College Writing classes, he teaches (or has taught) a variety of literature classes, including Introduction to Literature, World Literature, and the Bible as Literature. On some weekends throughout the year, with a host of other teachers, he shares the responsibility of reading and scoring CBEST essays up North, and once a year has the pleasure of AP readings back East.

TEACHING POETRY

(Continued from Page 3)

not to poetry itself. The students object to having to like everything the teacher likes, to having something spoiled by a constant rehashing, to having to pick out metaphors and meters.

6. The major objection, however, is that poetry is difficult, that many things are mentioned which the student has never heard of, that the vocabulary is difficult, that the poem has to be read several times, and that 'a person has to be thinking all the time and not overlook a word.'

The teacher's job is cut out for her: she must overcome this antipathy. However, in order to accomplish this, she must herself appreciate this mode of expression before she will be able to instill any sort of appreciation in her students. If she attempts to teach before she is herself at home in verse and delighted by it, she is confronted by one of two dangers: either she will force her students to explicate the poems, focusing on form and meaning, or she will avoid the issue by not teaching poetry at all or by urging her students to arrive at their own interpretations. The teacher's enthusiasm for and enjoyment of poetry should be genuine, for students are quick to detect falseness. But before she begins "teaching" poetry, she must determine what she hopes to accomplish by exposing her students to poetry; in other words, what is her aim?

Perhaps the least worthy aim, yet unfortunately one often stressed, is preparing students for examinations, be they class or departmental. Perhaps equally unworthy is that a familiarity with the names and works of great writers adds to the students' chances of appearing to advantage in the world, especially in that portion of society where they can least afford to be at a disadvantage (although for our materialistic students this may well be the ideal motivation).

The teacher of poetry, indeed of all literature, "needs to keep a firm grasp on the central fact that he is seeking always to help specific human beings—not some generalized fiction called *the student*—to discover the pleasures and satisfactions of literature" (Rosenblatt 32). The teacher must recognize that he must deal with his students as if he were dealing with himself at their age. If he can accomplish this, he shall not bore them with "dull moralizings under the pretext that . . . [he was] introducing them to the delights of literature" (Bates 381). The aim of the teacher of literature, especially in the secondary schools and in introductory college literature courses, should be to see that the selections read bring delight to the students, nourish the power of thinking, and foster an appreciation of be allowed to take care of themselves.

Some point out these facts to the students before any poetry is read; others have the students see these facts after they have read several poems. However, there seems little value in giving students a list of items on how to read poetry. It is analogous to giving a potential driver written instructions on how to shift and then expecting her to be able to drive by herself. It seems to me that by far the best approach is to read several poems in class and have the students discover the techniques as they experience the poems.

Although some writers suggest that one of the best ways to get students to understand the poem is to introduce them to the poet—making them aware of the poet's life and the germinal points of his work and, at the same time, establishing him as a person—it is surprising how many teachers suggest staying away from the biographical approach. As far back as 1901, Professor Benjamin Heydrick pointed out that although biography, literary history, and manner and customs are valuable, they are, after all, "only a means to an end, and that end is the appreciation and enjoyment of a literary masterpiece"

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(v). Arlo Bates is much more forceful in his opposition to the extrinsic factor:

obscure the fact that the poem and not the poet is what literary study is about; the poem is of prime importance.

This is not to say, however, that extrinsic matters must be completely omitted from any course of study; only that biographical or historical information that is pertinent and helps students better understand the work should be included.

Another approach that seems to be used much too frequently and, from what I can gather, with little success is the overemphasis on the technical and mechanical aspects of the poem. The study of rhyme schemes, meter, types of figurative language, and poetic forms, for their own sake, seems futile and useless. Rather, students should be introduced to the poetical theory and terminology that seems most likely to be valuable for the poem being discussed. As Professor Hook so aptly stated some time ago,

> The students must know something about poetic architecture in order to understand and appreciate, just as he can better appreciate the beauty of a cathedral if he knows something about naves, transepts, arches, and keystones. But minute metrical analysis is more the province of the professional poet or scholar . . . . (200)

It is far better that students fail to get the exact meaning of half the obscure passages than be bored by a close scanning of the poem.

Having seen many students being required to pore over a poem and pick out the examples of iambic pentameter or identify the rhyme scheme or pick out examples of simile, or metaphor, or alliteration, I can readily see why so many of them have developed such an aversion to poetry. How can any work appeal to a student if it becomes nothing more than a vehicle for learning dry mechanical details? As Lezlie Couch discovered, "this minute attention to the characteristics of poetry inhibited their [the students'] enjoyment of and participation in poetry" (30).

Even those teachers who would not begin the study of poetry with a study of the mechanics tend to devote too much time to this aspect. Some suggest that teachers do not give their students enough credit for being interested in such matters as rhyme scheme and meter, that many would appreciate the order and form of poems. Perhaps, but I sincerely doubt this. After all, how many such students are there? Not even among the college students, unless they be English majors, do I find any anxious to learn the mechanics. If anything, I find that perhaps the major reason given by my college students for their dislike of poetry is that they had been forced to learn

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that portion of society where they can least afford to be at a disadvantage (although for our materialistic students this may well be the ideal motivation).

The teacher of poetry, indeed of all literature, "needs to keep a firm grasp on the central fact that he is seeking always to help specific human beings—not some generalized fiction called *the student*—to discover the pleasures and satisfactions of literature" (Rosenblatt 32). The teacher must recognize that he must deal with his students as if he were dealing with himself at their age. If he can accomplish this, he shall not bore them with "dull moralizings under the pretext that . . . [he was] introducing them to the delights of literature" (Bates 381). The aim of the teacher of literature, especially in the secondary schools and in introductory college literature courses, should be to see that the selections read bring delight to the students, nourish the power of thinking, and foster an appreciation of good literature.

Up to this point, most writers on the subject agree. Differences of opinion arise, however, on how this appreciation is to be fostered.

Some teachers propose that the students must first be made aware of the differences between prose and poetry. They suggest that students first be led into narrative verse where they can get the pleasure from a good story compactly told, for here the purposes of poetry and prose are very similar. Before the students read much lyric poetry, they should understand how the poet's purpose differs from that of the prose writer. By reading to the students brief lyrics that express emotions and experiences familiar to them, the teacher can make clear the purpose of lyric poetry and the difference between its purpose and the purpose of prose. Students should become aware that lyric poetry is a reasonable, individual art form; that poetry tends towards concentration in form; and that it concerns itself with feelings and ideas, making use of suggestions rather than depending merely on explicit statements. They should also have an awareness that a poet practices great selectivity in comparison with ordinary treatment in prose because the poet is aiming, not at full information about events, but at telling a story for effect. Furthermore, the poet appeals to the imagination.

In addition to the above, students should be made to realize several points about reading poetry: (1) Poetry should be read aloud so that the tone of voice helps to convey the feeling and meaning of the poem. Reading silently is akin to singing a song without emitting any sound. (2) Poetry is punctuated just as prose is, except for capitalization, and the punctuation guides the reader; the end of a line usually has no significance as far as grammatical meaning is concerned. (3) Poetry generally should be read for the meaning; rhythm and meter should

(v). Arlo Bates is much more forceful in his opposition to the extrinsic factors:

> I would have the secondary school do little with the history of authors, less with the criticism of style, and have no more explanation of difficulties of language and of structure than is necessary for the student's enjoyment. In a time when the draughts made by daily life upon the attention of the young are so tremendous, when the pressure of the more immediately practical branches of instruction is so great, to add drudgery in connection with literature seems to me completely futile and doubly wrong. [This in 1906; what would he have said in this day and age?] The supreme test of success in whatever work in literature is done in schools . . . should be, according to my conviction, whether it has given delight, has fostered a love of whatever is best in imaginative writings in life (30).

Most modern educators, at least those who publish their ideas, tend to agree with Mr. Bates that the history of a poem, the biography of the poet, the times during which the poet lived should be kept subordinate to the poem and should come after the student has a fair idea and appreciation of the poem itself. They feel such extrinsic factors should be used only to help clarify and enrich meaning.

Perhaps the reason why so many teachers in the classroom still insist on spending countless periods discussing the author's life, assigning students to report on the period during which the work was written, having students carefully study the introductions given by the erudite editors of anthologies and texts, is that it is much easier to teach details about the life of a writer than it is to train the mind to a true appreciation of literature itself. Without a doubt, it is much easier to formulate questions for class recitations and examination on literary history and biography than on the work itself. Yet nothing should can any work appeal to a student if it becomes nothing more than a vehicle for learning dry mechanical details? As Lezlie Couch discovered, "this minute attention to the characteristics of poetry inhibited their [the students'] enjoyment of and participation in poetry" (30).

Even those teachers who would not begin the study of poetry with a study of the mechanics tend to devote too much time to this aspect. Some suggest that teachers do not give their students enough credit for being interested in such matters as rhyme scheme and meter, that many would appreciate the order and form of poems. Perhaps, but I sincerely doubt this. After all, how many such students are there? Not even among the college students, unless they be English majors, do I find any anxious to learn the mechanics. If anything, I find that perhaps the major reason given by my college students for their dislike of poetry is that they had been forced to learn these dry mechanics.

Some teachers would limit the students entirely to the poem, for they adhere to the concept that the poem must stand by itself. They feel that to call attention to any extrinsic factors or to point out any technical aspects would confuse the reader. They may even go so far as to call a poem a story.

But here again a basic weakness exists. In order for students to derive anything of value from a poem, they must be made to realized that any interpretation is wrong if it is contradicted

(TEACHING POETRY, Continued on Page 15)

***inside english* DEADLINES**

Manuscripts received after the deadline for a given issue will be considered for the next appropriate issue.

MARCH 1992 issue
Teaching Writing at All Levels
15 January 1992

MAY 1992 issue
The Challenge of Teaching English in the '90s
15 March 1992

TEACHING POETRY

(Continued from Page 14)

by any detail in the poem. Hence, they will have to be made aware of those factors that are relevant. Anything that increases comprehension is good. Many recommend that before the poem is read, all obstacles that might hinder ease and smoothness of progress in reading be removed. Difficult words should be taught well in advance; difficult passages should be explained. Also it may be necessary to clarify any difference between the point of view of the work studied and that of the students' lives.

Within the basic approaches that have been discussed, there are probably as many specific, "highly recommended" techniques of teaching poetry as there are teachers. Each teacher who has been able to hold his students' attention throughout a poetry unit feels confident that his technique is the one.

However, one factor remains imperative: the true function of the poem should be to supply the reader with enjoyment. In order for this to take place, there must be a recognition that the readers of poetry cannot be passive; they must be active participants. It is important "to help students understand . . . that their engagement with the poem is an event in itself. Just as the poem was generated by an event, the reading of the poem becomes yet another event—related and yet very different from the original situation which motivated the poet" (Couch 33).

Instructors must help students ask the right questions. As Benjamin DeMott stresses,

> The building materials with which we work come in the form of responses to questions that we ourselves pose from the moment we start reading. What is being talked about here? How do we make sense of this reaction? What caused this particular moment of feeling? What would it be like to be the person who's experiencing this feeling? . . . Does the person understand his or her feelings here and now? Why? Why not? . . . How will this person explain this moment of feeling and action in the future? (80)

Any method of teaching poetry that does not take this into account is doomed to failure. In each instance, the teacher must know her students, their likes and dislikes, their experience, their dreams, their ambitions. She must choose her poems carefully; she must tailor the motivation and the approach to the group; she must instill within the students an appreciation for this literary genre and show them that poetry can open a whole new vista of pleasure for them. This will often require that the basic antagonism and antipathy of the students must be overcome. And any method, be it orthodox or no, that will he can even hope to convince his students of the poem's pleasures—he will not employ any technique that might jeopardize that aim. The study of biography, of metrics, of rhyme, of figurative language, of literary history, for their own sake will nor further that aim. All of these become valuable only when they aid the understanding and enjoyment.

As Professor Rosenblatt so aptly stated in her groundbreaking work, "The teacher's job, in its fundamental terms, . . . consists in furthering a fruitful interrelationship between the individual book or poem or play and the individual student. The teacher is dealing with a necessarily fluctuating and dynamic problem. His material is no less than the infinite series of possible interactions between the individual minds and the individual literary works" (32-33).

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Harry Teitelbaum, a retired New York high school English teacher and department chairman and adjunct college professor, currently teaches English at Saddleback College. He has had several texts and numerous articles published, most recently "Why Cant They Lern to Spel It Rite?" in the May issue of The Clearing House. *He writes, "I know that much has been written about the teaching of poetry, but I feel that [the above] article synthesizes some of that thinking. Much of it reflects my over thirty years of experience on the secondary school and college level."*

INDIVIDUAL SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIPS OFFERED

In order to continue to be an *effective* voice in English education for the California Two-Year Colleges, we are asking your support by becoming a sustaining member of ECCTYC. Previously we have relied on institutional membership/subscriptions to maintain *inside english* and our other endeavors. More and more of our activities are centered on timely responses to current issues such as testing, assessment/placement, and workload, and our financial base needs to be broadened to include more frequent mailings todepartment chairs, more regional activities for teachers and chairs, and more representation at key meetings. Thus, we are appealing to you to support ECCTYC, the only organization devoted solely to the professional concerns of Calfornia community college English teachers, by becoming a sustaining member for $15 a year.

The English Council of the California Two-Year Colleges represents and serves the profession in a number of significant ways:

1. ECCTYC promotes excellence in teaching by
   - publishing *inside english*, a journal for Calfornia community college instructors
   - sponsoring biennial conferences alternating between south and north locations
   - conducting south and north meetings of English chairs
   - conducting regional meetings
   - sponsoring literature conferences at Lake Arrowhead
   - publishing a newsletter for Chairs, *ChairSpeak*
2. ECCTYC represents the interests of English teachers throughout the state by
   - preparing workload studies
   - advocating for community college interests in UC and CSU, and with legislators

being talked about here? How do we make sense of this reaction? What caused this particular moment of feeling? What would it be like to be the person who's experiencing this feeling? . . . Does the person understand his or her feelings here and now? Why? Why not? . . . How will this person explain this moment of feeling and action in the future? (80)

Any method of teaching poetry that does not take this into account is doomed to failure. In each instance, the teacher must know her students, their likes and dislikes, their experience, their dreams, their ambitions. She must choose her poems carefully; she must tailor the motivation and the approach to the group; she must instill within the students an appreciation for this literary genre and show them that poetry can open a whole new vista of pleasure for them. This will often require that the basic antagonism and antipathy of the students must be overcome. And any method, be it orthodox or no, that will accomplish this is the right approach.

Over the many years, I have developed my own method, which works most of the time. I begin by asking the class if they like poetry. After fielding the many negative responses, I, like Shafer (2) and, I am sure, many others, remind them of their love for nursery rhymes. From this, we move to a discussion of the lyrics on greeting cards and the lyrics of popular music. At this point, most students realize that they do not dislike all poetry, only some poetry, mainly that which is taught in school. Obviously, we teachers must have done something wrong to have reversed this basic love.

The next phase is to make the class aware of how the rhythm in music affects one's mood. This is often accomplished by playing different musical selections for the class and asking them to respond. From this it is a logical step to a discussion of the similar use of rhythm in language, stressing how important it is to read the poem aloud and listen to the rhythm of the language. I reinforce this by reading some carefully chosen poems, usually humorous ones, which the students find enjoyable, not at all like "the poems we had to read." Throughout our study of poetry I introduce only those poetic techniques that will enhance the students' comprehension and appreciation. The same applies to extrinsic factors. I do stress that the students do not have to like the poems being read, but they must understand the meaning before making any judgment. On the whole, my students' reactions to poetry are positive, with many indicating a desire to read more poetry on their own.

As long as the teacher never loses sight of the fact that he wants his students to derive the same pleasures from poetry that he enjoys—and he must enjoy poetry, truly enjoy it, before

more representation at key meetings. Thus, we are appealing to you to support ECCTYC, the only organization devoted solely to the professional concerns of Calfornia community college English teachers, by becoming a sustaining member for $15 a year.

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   - preparing workload studies
   - advocating for community college interests in UC and CSU, and with legislators
3. ECCTYC has appointees to the state committees on
   - Basic Skills Assessment
   - California Writing Project
   - Intersegmental Coordinating Committee (ICC) English Assessment Committee
   - Basic Skills—Academic Senate
4. ECCTYC sends representatives to
   - the CSU and UC English Councils
   - the CSU Composition Committee
   - CSU Literacy Committee
5. ECCTYC has developed liaisons to better represent community college interests with
   - the State Chancellor's office
   - the Academic Senate
   - the State Department of Education
   - the State Legislature
   - California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC)
   - organizations such as CATESOL/TESOL, MLA, CATE, NCTE, CCCC
   - California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP)

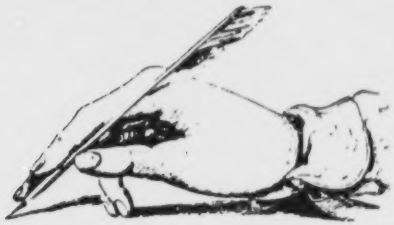
For more information about the organization see "President's Perspective" in the October 1990 issue of *inside english*.

Department chairs have been sent application forms. Please ask your chair for a copy of the form and send your membership application to

Mr. William Decker, Membership Co-Chair
Language Arts Division
College of the Sequoias
915 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93277
(209) 733-2050

ECCTYC CONFERENCE

(Continued from Page 11)



FILM AS LITERATURE IN THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

DARIUS COOPER (San Diego Mesa College), ED DORNAN (Orange Coast College), and JIM STRATTON (Fullerton College) discussed ways in which film offers students the opportunity to study literature through another medium and to gain critical thinking and visual literacy skills not always derived from study of printed literature. Panelists agreed that films are autonomous artistic creations that should be taught independently from any written versions that may have inspired them. They assign four to six written papers a semester and may also have students keep a journal.

Though each differed in his own background and preparation, the panelists agreed that effectively teaching a film-as-literature course requires study in film in addition to the traditional M.A. in composition or literature. Discussion from the audience focused on whether or not film will replace printed literature for our students and how its study complements students' appreciation of literature and the arts.

ROBERT DEES
Orange Coast College

TEACHING LANGUAGE-MINORITY STUDENTS IN THE MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM

ROBIN SCARCELLA distributed handouts showing the widespread linguistic and cultural diversity in the United States, particularly California, and discussed the educational implications of such variety. Scarcella explained some of the ways various non-native speakers learn most effectively, as well as the cultural or linguistic barriers that may hinder their progress in acquiring English. She also explained some of the different, non-traditional viewpoints and expectations parents of non-native students may have and how these can affect the students' attitudes and performance in the classroom. Near the close of the session, Scarcella briefly reviewed a handout offering guidelines for composition assignments and steps for effectively guiding language-minority students through the composing process.

ROBERT DEES
Orange Coast College

THE BROWNINGS

The wonder of it: that love works out
so well for some. Before their first meeting,
his letter replied "I love you too."
And she, surrounded by fan mail, reported
of this unknown, "He sends me into ecstasy."

Even the father, from this distance, provides
the right resistance to young lovers. As
indeed,
does death—those moments, frail and
tubercular
they nursed to blushful health. They spoke
about parting and rehearsed their reunions.

I see him always on that last mountain,
wearing perhaps plus fours, picking along
with an alpenstock, the storm feathering
his face. It's just another ending,
something familiar I never read any more.

JIM EWING

ASSIGNMENTS THAT LINK DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH WITH READING AND WRITING LABS

NAN WISHNER and MARGE CHOY outlined a new course recently developed at Solano College. Recognizing the need for a course that would integrate reading and writing as well as provide lab time for remedial writing students, Wishner, in collaboration with other instructors and aides, developed a five-unit course that included a three-unit lecture section and two one-unit lab components, one in reading and one in writing.

Further, Wishner and Choy created assignments to link work in this developmental English course with the reading and writing labs. Built around a series of eclectic, multicultural readings, the assignments' themes include stereotyping, prejudice, women's roles, morality, heroism, and loss.

The presentation, which outlined in detail the course's success and a few of its weaknesses, was well-received and highly informative.

RICHARD EDMUNDS
Yuba College

EMPOWERING 127 STUDENTS

MARLENE MARTIN (former English chair, Monterey Peninsula College) and JOANNE CAPPELUTI (Fullerton College) presented ideas on turning students from passive to active learners.

CLASSROOM-BASED RESEARCH: TECHNIQUES FOR ASSESSING WRITING STUDENTS

For teachers wanting to improve student retention, up the GPA of their classes, and have classrooms filled with students who have done their reading, MICHELLE WILDER

strategies.

Opening with a 3×5 card for a Background Probe, Wilder was able, in less than three minutes, to determine her audience's level of ignorance and shift her presentation's focus to accommodate our needs. She followed

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Yuba College

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Martin's reference to the "banking" method of teaching, in which the learned (the instructors) deposit knowledge on the unknowing (the students), parallels Cappeluti's "sausage stuffing" analogy of students as empty sausage cases that need to be stuffed. Both prefer the "pearl finder" view of learning, in which education is the irritating grain of sand that finds its way into the oyster shell, ultimately forming a pearl.

Martin demonstrated an assignment in which student groups choose articles from *Time* or *Newsweek* to present to the class, teaching "main idea" and "suppprting details" skills and leading a discussion of the article. All students, including the presenters, participate in critiquing a video of the presentation and in assigning grades.

Cappeluti presented a method of empowering students and making them authorities in the writing process. All essays are first drafted in class. Cappeluti reads the papers, but instead of commenting individually, she comments to the entire group about strong and weak points of the essays. Students are taught to evaluate and see the need for thesis statements and logical connections. With this information, the students then revise individually. After peer-editing sessions, students submit their final versions to Cappeluti for a grade.

GLORIA REID
Ohlone College

CLASSROOM-BASED RESEARCH: TECHNIQUES FOR ASSESSING WRITING STUDENTS

For teachers wanting to improve student retention, up the GPA of their classes, and have classrooms filled with students who have done their reading, MICHELLE WILDER (Mt. San Antonio and Fullerton Colleges) offered advice, based on the Cross/Angelo Classroom-Based Research methodologies, to accomplish these three goals.

After she adopted the Cross/Angelo model, Wilder's student attrition dropped by two-thirds, students' grades rose half a grade point, and students came to class prepared. Wilder's interactive, information-filled, and fast paced session showed us how to use the Background Probe technique and introduced us to the Do/Say, Memory Matrix, and Invented Dialogue strategies.

Opening with a 3×5 card for a Background Probe, Wilder was able, in less than three minutes, to determine her audience's level of ignorance and shift her presentation's focus to accommodate our needs. She followed with a quick move through a well-prepared and succinct handout, showed a video demonstrating the Cross/Angelo method, and answered questions from the participants.

Wilder offered those present some quick and easy techniques to use on the Monday following the session. Some of us have already begun using Background Probes or the Memory Matrix—a testament to Wilder's effective presentation.

LYNN FAUTH
Oxnard College

PUBLISHING STUDENT WRITING: WAYS AND ISSUES

The four panelists—JIM ARMSTRONG (Fullerton College), RAY OBSTFELDT (Orange Coast College), LINDA THOMAS (Irvine Valley College), and BOB RIPPY (San Bernardino Valley College)—represented publications that varied widely in purpose, governing philosophy, student involvement, and funding. Fullerton's *Voices* publishes essays from Freshman Composition classes, is edited by faculty, and accepts only faculty-recommended submissions. Irvine Valley's six-year-old *The Elephant Ear* solicits material from the larger Orange County community and is faculty edited. *Orange Coast Review*, a student-edited publication, is in its third year and is open to anyone. San Bernardino Valley's *Phineas*, twenty-two years old, is student edited and open only to Valley College students.

After the panelists gave a brief history of their college's publication and discussed the nuts and bolts of publishing a magazine on college campuses today, the audience asked numerous questions: How can we get a magazine started? How can we provide a high quality magazine within a given budget? How can we tap alternative sources of funding? The participants also discussed censorship, recent technology, alternative formats, and the role of the faculty advisor.

ROBERT RIPPY
San Bernardino Valley College

And she, surrounded by fan mail, reported
of this unknown, "He sends me into ecstasy."
Even the father, from this distance, provides
the right resistance to young lovers. As
indeed,
does death—those moments, frail and
tubercular
they nursed to blushful health. They spoke
about parting and rehearsed their reunions.

I see him always on that last mountain,
wearing perhaps plus fours, picking along
with an alpenstock, the storm feathering
his face. It's just another ending,
something familiar I never read any more.

JIM EWING
Fresno City College

Mr. Ewing teaches writing—both expository and creative—full time at FCC. He hopes soon to finish his book of poems Escape from Scotland *and have it published in his native country. He tells us, "Although I was indoctrinated in publish-perish, I have no interest in publishing in journals that my colleagues and I don't read."*

INTRO TO POETRY 1A

Every poem is a secret message
waiting to be decoded
I tell my students.
So what's the message in this one,
teacher?
That life is very long
that the heart grows frail
that nature sails blindly along
under its own speed
neither wanting nor needing poets
that God is preoccupied
that life can be an ache
you dare not give up.

LEONORA HOLDER DE ÁVILA

Leonora de Ávila wrote this poem while a professor of English and American Literature at Rio Hondo College where she taught for seventeen years. Since resigning three years ago, she has published poetry, essays, and book reviews in a number of literary journals and periodicals.

MYTHS

(Continued from Page 13)

only that, the myths present a much fuller view of the world than we get on something like Dynasty, which thrives on the simplistic and the self-indulgent."

With his droopy Fu Manchu swaying on either side of his mouth, Adams leaned forward on his chair and shook his open hand at me.

"Yes sir?" I asked.

"Hey, you just mentioned lust. Are some of these Greek stories—" he paused thoughtfully for a moment and then continued—"Are these stories, you know, dirty?" The other inmates chuckled.

"Yeah, are they X-rated?" wondered FDR. His Van Gogh face lit up with a smile.

Immediately, Honest Abe turned around in his seat and expounded his own theory about what would make a good lust story. He focused on anatomical perfection while FDR. was more concerned with biological veracity. Adams mentioned his favorite body parts to Kennedy, the inmate with Asian features and the long ponytail. Jefferson rubbed his big hands together excitedly and sighed, "Yum, yum!"

"Gentlemen, can we quiet down for a moment?" I asked in a loud voice. The din gradually subsided and I continued: "The fascinating Greek myths, like sex, have been around for thousands of years, and the myths, like sex, will certainly stimulate you."

Plucking excitedly at his woolly sideburns, Adams wondered, "Will these lusty myths have pictures of righteous babes in them?"

"No. You'll have to watch beer commercials to see righteous babes. But you will read about women like Medea, Atalanta, Cassandra, and Clytemnestra—all strong women and fascinating characters."

"But I don't like strong women," Adams objected. "I like tall women with big boobs and no brains."

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A guffaw rippled back and forth across the room. As it subsided, I said, "Then, Mr. ishing mysteries of good writing, and to that noble end we will use the material from Greek myths in all our exercises. In other words, Mr. Pierce, we are questing after that most elusive of all educational beasts: wholeness."

Franklin Pierce shook his thick head of jet black hair. "Man, I have no idea what you're talking about."

"You lost me too," Honest Abe noted.

A little frustrated, I said, "Maybe what I mean by wholeness will come out when we discuss the course organization and take

a look at the syllabus." With that I passed out the course syllabus. Whatever impetus I once had, I no longer felt energized enough to finish the class. I glanced down at my watch and saw that it was only 10:35. It was my fate to be in that stuffy room with a contentious bunch of felons till 11:30. Desperately, I needed more caffeine.

"For the course," I began wearily, "you [illegible]

trait like lust, hospitality, or violence; select examples of that trait from a variety of myths; and put them into a vivid paragraph."

"I got dibs on lust," declared Adams with a smirk. His droopy Fu Manchu dangled obscenely, and he plucked excitedly at his woolly sideburns.

"In the Example Paragraph," I continued, "you will use specific examples from the myths. Specific examples are the key to all good writing and, of course, to all good thinking. You'll notice our politicians rarely use specific examples in their speeches, which is a clue to their intelligence, or lack thereof." [Doing this assignment, Kennedy wrote twelve handwritten, single spaced pages on the subject of hospitality. Dark haired, broad shouldered Franklin Pierce wrote five tightly crammed pages full of examples on bravery, while Jefferson wrote an excellent paragraph on selfishness in the myths.]

"For your last assignment," I said, "you [illegible]

the underworld, Hades; and Adams, the human osprey, demonstrated in a compelling essay that he was very similar to Prometheus. Both Adams antl Prometheus had suffered for their beliefs. Revealing a deep-seated love for his estranged wife and his two daughters, the husky Chicano, Franklin Pierce, contrasted himself to the witch, Medea.]

Once more the small, overcrowded class seemed unbearably warm, almost tropical, and the faces of the fifteen inmates revealed either disappointment or boredom.

"I committed a First Degree and Second Degree murder for which I'm serving forty-four years to life. I must do twenty-nine years before going in front of a parole board. Greek myths are okay, but there are too many hard names to spell. Also, to improve the class, it would help to have a little more time on the 'opportunities,' maybe eight minutes instead of five." *Jefferson*

"One last point, gentlemen," I said with little enthusiasm. "At start of every class I will, out of the infinite benevolence in my heart, give you an opportunity worth ten points."

At once Jefferson raised his beefy arm. He had pushed his straw hat to the side so that it was canted atop the black mass of his kinky hair. He grinned, and I noticed for the first time that he had a rather pronounced gap between his two front teeth.

I said, "Yes sir?"

"Man, what's this stuff about 'opportunities'? Are you talking about quizzes?"

"Quiz is such an ugly word," I replied. "Opportunity is much nicer. This is college, and it's up to each of you whether you want to take advantage of the opportunity or not. If one morning you discover that your stock portfolio has taken quite a hit, and you're depressed about the loss of capital, you don't have to take advantage of that particular opportunity."

"Then we lose points, right?" Honest Abe observed.

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"No. You will have thirteen opportunities,

ing Greek myths, like sex, have been around for thousands of years, and the myths, like sex, will certainly stimulate you."

Plucking excitedly at his woolly sideburns, Adams wondered, "Will these lusty myths have pictures of righteous babes in them?"

"No. You'll have to watch beer commercials to see righteous babes. But you will read about women like Medea, Atalanta, Cassandra, and Clytemnestra—all strong women and fascinating characters."

"But I don't like strong women," Adams objected. "I like tall women with big boobs and no brains."

A guffaw rippled back and forth across the room. As it subsided, I said, "Then, Mr. Adams, you are a perfect student for myths. Reading about strong Greek women will wean you from your—how shall I say it?—your obsession for women's body parts. In fact, our first assignment will be to read how a coward's obsession for the body parts of a beautiful airhead started a ten year war, the most famous war in our tradition."

"I am in Folsom because of First Degree Murder. My sentence is twenty five years to life. I think the use of Greek Mythology is very educational. It gives you an interesting reading and some Greek history." F. Pierce

At the back of the room sat an inmate who had thick, wavy, black hair and a heavy black mustache. He had broad shoulders and a thick neck and looked like a football player. He raised his arm, which was coverd with tattoos.

"My name is Franklin Pierce," he announced in a Chicano accent, "and all I got to say is what do I care about the Greeks? Ain't this an English composition course?"

I rubbed my cheek and took a deep breath. "Yes, Mr. Pierce, this is a composition course, and you will write till your fingers drop off from your knuckle bones. We will plumb the fascinating depths of grammar till you know the fatal difference between a gerund and a participle. I'll reveal to you the astonishing secrets of the semicolon. Now, let's take a look at the syllabus." With that I passed out the course syllabus. Whatever impetus I once had, I no longer felt energized enough to finish the class. I glanced down at my watch and saw that it was only 10:35. It was my fate to be in that stuffy room with a contentious bunch of felons till 11:30. Desperately, I needed more caffeine.

"For the course," I began wearily, "you will have three major writing assignments: a Narrative Paragraph, an Example Paragraph, and a Comparison or Contrast Essay. Each assignment must be written in four steps: Freewriting, Outlining, a Rough Draft, and a Second Draft. Each of the four steps is progressively graded."

Jefferson, the inmate in the straw hat who sat at Honest Abe's table, shook his head. "Man, this sounds like the same old-fashioned, boring English stuff to me. Which is why I dropped out of high school in the first place."

Without responding to this barb, I continued. "For our first writing assignment, the Narrative Paragraph, you will put yourself in the middle of a myth and describe your perspective on that myth. For example, you may want to desrcibe what it was like going with Theseus into the Labyrinth."

The class responded to this announcement with a chorus of groans and complaints. [When they did the assignment, Adams told how he rescued Helen of Troy by using a Cobra gunship and his Ninja martial arts techniques. Honest Abe described how he taught Odysseus and the Cyclops, Polyphemus, about Harriet Tubman. FDR related in poetic detail the tension and fear of the Greeks who had hidden themselves inside the Trojan Horse.]

I plodded on. "Our second major assignment will be to write in four steps an Example Paragraph. Each of you will pick a human specific examples in their speeches, which is a clue to their intelligence, or lack thereof." [Doing this assignment, Kennedy wrote twelve handwritten, single spaced pages on the subject of hospitality. Dark haired, broad shouldered Franklin Pierce wrote five tightly crammed pages full of examples on bravery, while Jefferson wrote an excellent paragraph on selfishness in the myths.]

"For your last assignment," I said, "you will either contrast or compare yourself to a mythological character, male or female. This exercise will introduce you to the thrills of essay writing, which is the most complex skill you will learn in college. In fact, I always compare the writing of an essay to the complexities of writing a symphony."

Shaking his narrow face, Honest Abe wagged his goatee at me and threw his skinny arm up in the air.

"Yes," I said warily.

"Hey, Teach, did you ever write a symphony?"

"No."

"Then how do you know what it's like to write one?"

"Good point, Abe," I admitted. "I have never written a symphony, but using my imagination I have been able to smash my way out of the dungeon of my ignorance, just as you'll do when you will put yourself head to head with a mythological character."

"To some white man that I have nothing in common with," Honest Abe shot back.

"Right on," Jefferson agreed. [For this assignment Honest Abe compared himself to the goddess of love, Aphrodite, in a fascinating essay. His friend with the straw hat, Jefferson, compared himself to Telemachus, the faithful son of Odysseus. Tobacco-spitting FDR contrasted himself to the dour god of

between his two front teeth.

I said, "Yes sir?"

"Man, what's this stuff about 'opportunities'? Are you talking about quizzes?"

"Quiz is such an ugly word," I replied. "Opportunity is much nicer. This is college, and it's up to each of you whether you want to take advantage of the opportunity or not. If one morning you discover that your stock portfolio has taken quite a hit, and you're depressed about the loss of capital, you don't have to take advantage of that particular opportunity."

"Then we lose points, right?" Honest Abe observed.

"No. You will have thirteen opportunities, and only ten will count for your grade. Your three lowest will be dropped. If you decide not to take advantage of an opportunity, that one will be one of the three that is dropped. For each of these opportunities you will have to write a brief paragraph about the myth that is to be read for that day. Grammar and spelling are not important on the opportunities; content and specific details are the only things that I will use to evaluate your paragraph."

His dark brow furrowed with doubt, Franklin Pierce asked, "Do we have to spell all them Greek names correctly?"

"Good question, Mr. Pierce. Greek names can be torturous. Again, out of the infinite compassion in my heart, I will accept the first three letters of a Greek name. For example, you can use P-E-N for Pentheus and D-I-O for Dionysius."

Franklin Pierce was not reassured. He complained, "Man, I'm gonna have one helluva time with these stories. Is there another English course I can take?"

"My humble opinion," declared Honest Abe, "is that this course has a distinct racial bias, and I want to speak to the Ed Supervisor about it."

Jefferson agreed, "Right on."

FDR spat another gob of tobacco juice into the trash can and complained, "You

(MYTHS, Continued on Page 20)

REVIEWS

(Continued from Page 7)

process. After explaining how teachers actually hamper students' learning processes by focusing on thesis-driven papers (whereby the student is forced to read a text as having only one privileged position), Andrasick stresses that we must re-think our methods of teaching. "A successful literature classroom," she states, "depends upon careful disorder" (17). She criticizes linear approaches to papers and to students' reading/thinking processes. Moreover, she emphasizes that teachers should not be lecturing nor directing discussions to fit a set prescription for reading a text. Instead, she posits, students should be responsible for directing the discussion toward their own questions and ideas.

This is the strong point of Andrasick's book: the ways she enables students to generate ideas, to get involved critically with the texts they are reading. However, her contention that students' papers do not need a thesis concerns me. It is true that some English courses are not as formally structured, yet it seems that students writing critical analyses without a thesis will be prone to write papers that lack focus and logical order of ideas.

No matter how instructors feel about the necessity of thesis statements, however, they are sure to benefit from *Opening Texts*. Andrasick emphasizes the students' need to learn to generate ideas, to learn to approach texts with a critical eye. For example, the second chapter, "Enabling Critical Conversation," explains activities ("useful. but disorderly") that can help students recognize diversity in reading. Moreover, these activities foster student collaboration and, thus, peer emotional support. At the practical level, Andrasick explains how she sets up her "lesson plans"—what she will teach and how she will teach it—in addition to describing how she effectively works with her seating chart to note for future reference which students make which points. Her lesson plans

The next modules of the book continue to elaborate on the specific ways in which Andrasick's methods can be applied to the classroom. She describes several kinds of journals—dialogue journals (whereby students write in two parallel columns, one that quotes the text and the other that responds to it), process logs (whereby students respond informally to the text, giving their reactions as they progress through it), and reading responses (whereby students freewrite for ten to twenty minutes in response to what they have read). Not only does Andrasick explain what these methods are and give examples to show what some of her students did with them, but she also explains how to use these student-generated ideas in class, working with both small and large groups. Later in the book, she also describes how these informal writings can lead to more formal paper assignments.

The next module of chapters, called "Teaching Critical Distance," tries to move students away from argumentative writing (since students may be wary of the multiple responses to texts that they discovered in the "critical conversation" stage). Yet Andrasick recognizes that students need to learn to disengage from the text if they are to go beyond the plot summary stage. She asks her students to "transform" texts, first through imitation and second through "acquiring" them. Encouraging students to imitate texts playfully, she then asks them to consider why they made the changes they did and to evaluate what did and did not work for both the original and their imitation. She believes that this process "forces students to replicate three stages typical of critical inquiry: engagement with a text, analytical detachment from the text, and the generation of critical discourse about a text" (107). At the end of this chapter she provides six model assignments for teachers to use to help students disengage from the texts through imitation.

them from textual tyranny. She gives an example of how her class "acquired" Emerson's and Thoreau's transcendental works by going outdoors to silently observe nature before doing a freewrite in class and a more formal essay at home on transcendentalism and its relation to them. Andrasick indicates that some students "experience[d] the same kind of intellectual and emotional merging that Emerson described in 'Nature'" (121). The students, in acquiring texts, seem to be putting themselves in the authors' position, so they can share in the authors' experience and thus better analyze their words. How this would work for other types of literature, however, Andrasick does not explain.

What the transcendental assignment calls for is a sequencing of activities leading to a more formal critical analysis; series of assignments like this are the focus of the last module of the book, "Sequencing Critical Inquiry." Andrasick encourages her students to work with the texts in two ways: first, as readers, by making personal connections and then by moving toward a more distanced critical analysis, and second, as composers who create their own critical observations and also act as receivers of similar discourse, that of their peers. One chapter deals with sequencing with fiction and another with poetry; both give specific assignments and explain how they worked in An-

Many of the activities can be used, just not to the same extent. And Andrasick's fundamental position—that we need to discover other ways of teaching students to approach literary texts—certainly has merit. Additionally, Andrasick's enthusiasm about the ideas generated by her students should encourage many to rethink their methods of teaching students to write about literature.

Throughout the text, Andrasick exhibits a knowledge of composition theory and research to support her position that this method can reap benefits for the students, who should be at the core of everything we do in the classroom. In her conclusion Andrasick returns to the notion that we cannot be good teachers if we lose sight of what makes for good writing about literature: being good readers of literature. She reminds instructors that they, too, must continue to read and write so as to better teach their students, so as not to forget what students are going through as they try to analyze and create.

The tone of the book is straightforward; the book is not mired in technical terms or an authorial-created vocabulary. It reads quickly, partly because the reader gets caught up in the author's and the students' excitement as they learn to read texts critically and discover a voice with which to analyze. The practical applications of this text will vary, depending on how much one wants to glean from it. But every instructor who teaches writing through literature would profit from reading this book and expanding the ways in which we teach.

☐ Andrasick, Kathleen Dudden. *Opening Texts: Using Writing to Teach Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990. $16. 208 pages.

Michelle Pagni is a part-time English instructor at Riverside Community College while working on her PhD in English at the University of California, Riverside.

THE FOUR AND A HALF GENRES OF

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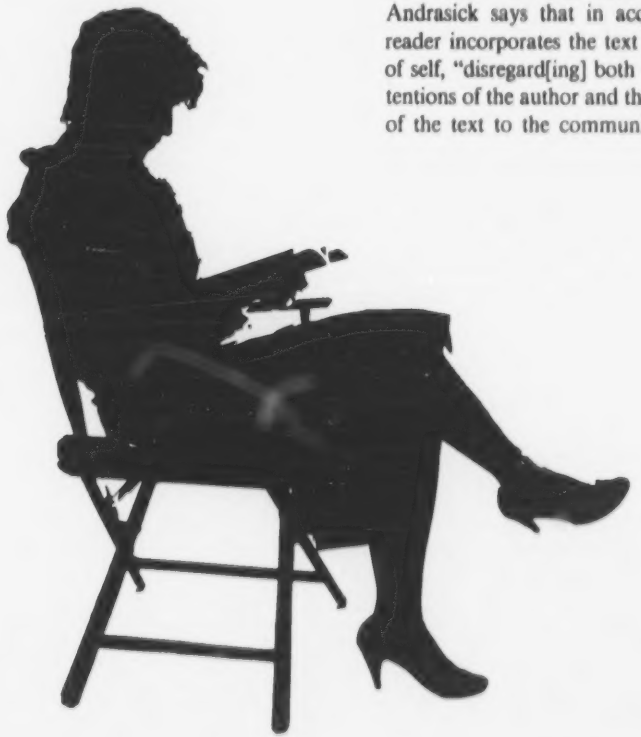

imitation and second through "acquiring" them. Encouraging students to imitate texts playfully, she then asks them to consider why they made the changes they did and to evaluate what did and did not work for both the original and their imitation. She believes that this process "forces students to replicate three stages typical of critical inquiry: engagement with a text, analytical detachment from the text, and the generation of critical discourse about a text" (107). At the end of this chapter she provides six model assignments for teachers to use to help students disengage from the texts through imitation.

Andrasick's idea of "acquiring" texts is not as clear as that of "transforming" them. Andrasick says that in acquiring texts, a reader incorporates the text in an assertion of self, "disregard[ing] both the original intentions of the author and the original value of the text to the community. The text is reshaped, disfigured even, for new purposes" (117). These activities, she insists, ask students to misread and misinterpret to free

What the transcendental assignment calls for is a sequencing of activities leading to a more formal critical analysis; series of assignments like this are the focus of the last module of the book, "Sequencing Critical Inquiry." Andrasick encourages her students to work with the texts in two ways: first, as readers, by making personal connections and then by moving toward a more distanced critical analysis, and second, as composers who create their own critical observations and also act as receivers of similar discourse, that of their peers. One chapter deals with sequencing with fiction and another with poetry; both give specific assignments and explain how they worked in Andrasick's classroom. She encourages students to work through their ideas as they determine what it is they want to say, rather than trying to commit to an idea—and a formalized structure—before they begin to write their paper. Andrasick's is very much an idea-oriented process, rather than a mechanistic one. She does not neglect, however, the fundamental aspects of teaching her students to work with quotations and eventually to organize their thoughts; she just does not want the students to sacrifice content to form.

Andrasick's method of teaching has obviously been put to the test in her own classroom; her ideas strike me as exciting yet only moderately applicable to the community-college classroom. The time her students devoted in-class to these activities seemed to surpass the number of hours we meet with our students. And to expect to get the same benefit from having the activities performed outside of the classroom—assuming the students would even take the time to do the activities at home—seems unrealistic. Moreover, it is not clear how well the sequencing would work if one or more of the steps were not completed by the students, should the activities be assigned as homework.

However, the book still has many useful applications at the community-college level. The practical applications of this text will vary, depending on how much one wants to glean from it. But every instructor who teaches writing through literature would profit from reading this book and expanding the ways in which we teach.

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THE FOUR AND A HALF GENRES OF LITERATURE

by CHARLES HOOD
Antelope Valley College

If any of my students were to be stranded on a desert island, this is a book I would like them to have. I say this despite my utter disgust with some of the editorial statements and my periodic desire to douse the whole thing in lighter fluid and strike a match. Yet it is just exactly *this*, the book's ability to provoke reaction, which makes it valuable. *Elements of Literature*, edited by Robert Scholes, et al, is a five genre intro-anthology and it's the damnedest thing, because it's got really fine passages, but every so often the authors come up with these zingers that leave me ready to torch the whole book. But because it's a book you can argue with (well enough written that you *want* to argue with it), it serves as a great model. My students need just such a model. In their own lives, few read well-written, insightful prose. Surprisingly, they have not even seen that much in their other English classes. You probably know what I mean, if you think about the desk copies piled up on your shelves. Most anthologies I've used have been competent and scholarly, but few have had any zest to them.

(REVIEWS, Continued on Page 19)

REVIEWS

(Continued from Page 18)

This sounds like a pizza ad, but it's true—how many teachers read the critical headings in the anthologies for pleasure? The literature itself, sure, of course. (In preparing this review, I was sidetracked into rereading all of *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof.* I couldn't help myself.) But the editorial parts of the texts usually have been bland as white rice. Scholes and company at least want to risk saying *something.* In this book, for example, one one of several definitions of fiction is that it is movement. That's a direct quote: "Fiction is movement." It may be more of a metaphor than intro students want to wrestle with, but still, it is an accurate (and helpful) observation, true even of metafiction.

The anthology's subtitle identifies five categories of material, which the book treats in sequence: essays, fiction, poetry, drama, and film. Hey, wait a minute here. Can "film" be "literature"? The editors imply yes without proving so, and that's a case we'll turn to shortly.

First, an overview. In this book each of the five genre blocks comes with its own introduction and guide to reading (or viewing) strategies, followed by sample texts with commentary. These often have further introductions buried within them—for example, a two-and-a-half-page discussion of sonnets precedes a selection of (only) six Shakespeare poems—but otherwise the selections are clean, lacking study questions or other apparatus. I mention this for information, in case you do assign study questions; I usually don't and am just as glad not to have them here. If you prefer them, you'll need to supply your own as the book contains none. In the selections the usual sorts of things are footnoted—archaic diction, mythological allusions, translators' by-lines, and obscure meanings. These notes do not intrude. Other than stills from *Citizen Kane* [illegible]

sand Kanes/Dissolve." The camera direction at the end on its own line works also as poetic final condition for Kane himself. But the entire script is not an easy beast to read, not having been written to read, and it soaks up a full hundred pages of text. Why would it be assigned as reading in any case? It is the film itself which is the art; scripts are drafts or alternate versions, not the end product itself.

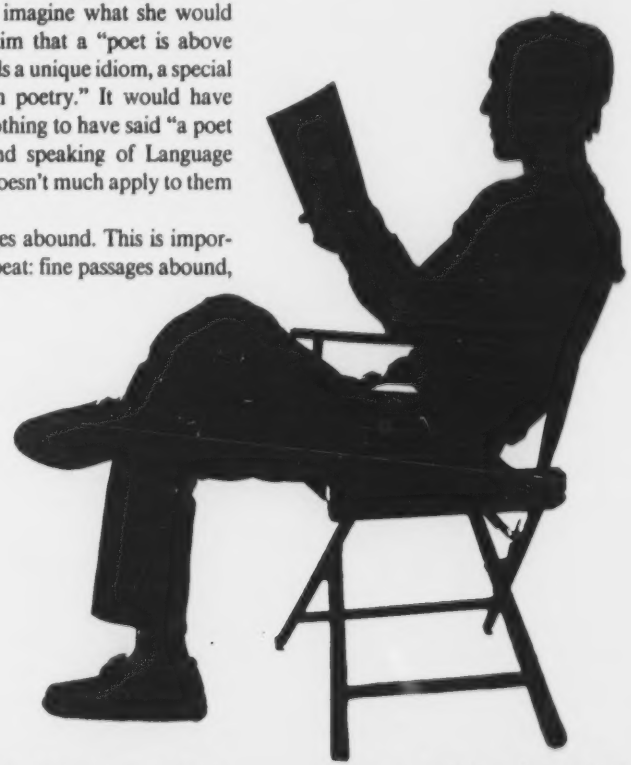
Note that I said "art," not "literature." Film can be art, I have no doubt of that. But why discuss film here at all? In the preface, the editors say that for "each of the four forms of literature, we have as before provided separate explanatory discussions, each approximately thirty pages in length. Our commitment to the understanding of literature has also moved us once again to include a special section on the contemporary art form—film—that is most closely related to the literary forms in this book." So, then, relatedness lends film credibility. The general introduction repeats this by explaining that because "film is related to literature, we have devoted a special section to it." That statement, though, is immediately qualified by the admission that film "is essentially visual, and therefore there can be no film printed in this text. But you will find discussion of one of the most important films of our time—*Citizen Kane*—and the ways it should be viewed, along with still-shot illustrations that such a discussion requires." Yes, but a discussion of *Kane* does not turn it into a conventional literary product; the film remains extraliterary, discussion or no. After reminding us of the shared traits of film and drama, the introduction concludes that literature "is not a closed field, though we sometimes pretend that for our own convenience."

Not a closed field? Maybe not, but a field nonetheless, one which includes *Paradise Lost* and not the Sistine Chapel. So I don't know what to make of this kissing-cousins [illegible]

Good poetry is never trivial. Robert Frost not withstanding, what made the editors write down such poppycock is beyond me.

They have a few other lapses as well. On page 268 John Cheever "lives in upstate New York," despite this edition having a copyright date of 1991. (Cheever died in 1985.) An Adrienne Rich poem quoted in the film section is given this line (turning her into a Language poet): "The earliest American dream (see p. 653 above)." As you can guess, her poem does not say to see that page or any other; "American dream" ends the line. (And in this edition, seeing page 653 won't do much good, since the Rich poem in its entirety is on page 744.) Speaking of Adrienne Rich, I can imagine what she would say about the claim that a "poet is above all a man who finds a unique idiom, a special voice for his own poetry." It would have cost the editors nothing to have said "a poet is a person." (And speaking of Language poets, this claim doesn't much apply to them either.)

Yet fine passages abound. This is important enough to repeat: fine passages abound,



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which is why this book belongs in the imaginary lifeboat. Samples to show this are a pleasure to find and to quote. From a dis-

read well at age twenty but other things take more study or more experience to appreciate.

The film section contains technical terms (take versus shot, aspect ratio) but also more reflective comments. In talking about a director's use of the edge of the screen, the editor points out that the tendency

> to look at the center of the image has been re-enforced over hundreds of years by the tradition of perspective that originated in paintings and drawings of the fifteenth century. This culturally inherited way of seeing is congruent with the convergent focal planes

of the eye which, unless trained in other ways, seeks out a vanishing point lying directly ahead and to the center.

commentary. These often have further introductions buried within them—for example, a two-and-a-half-page discussion of sonnets precedes a selection of (only) six Shakespeare poems—but otherwise the selections are clean, lacking study questions or other apparatus. I mention this for information, in case you do assign study questions; I usually don't and am just as glad not to have them here. If you prefer them, you'll need to supply your own as the book contains none. In the selections the usual sorts of things are footnoted—archaic diction, mythological allusions, translators' by-lines, and obscure meanings. These notes do not intrude. Other than stills from *Citizen Kane* used in the film section, there are no illustrations, and at the end there is a standard glossary and index. The whole package consumes 1600 pages.

For texts, the middle three choices—fiction, poetry, and drama—are automatic. Within these three blocks standard material has been anthologized. You'll find a regular list of favorites, from the Bard of Avon to the Belle of Amherst. There are forty-six stories, two hundred poems, and thirteen complete plays. The essay as a genre comes more recently to books of this type, and the editors posit that while most essays are not literary, some are, so sit down and shut up. I remain unconvinced that being literary is the same as being literature, but I like Annie Dillard's work so much I won't raise a ruckus. Let the essays stay. This has twenty-two essays, all but three from this century.

That leaves the fifth column, film. Many English teachers now teach *with* film, but few teach it *as* an art medium itself. Certainly it would be hard to prove that most scripts are literature, even something as nicely phrased as the shooting script for *Citizen Kane*, included in full. In small bits it seems literary enough, as with the passage: "Kane turns into a second corridor—sees himself reflected in the mirror behind him—multiplied again and again and again in long perspectives—Kane looks. We see a thou-

find discussion of one of the most important films of our time—*Citizen Kane*—and the ways it should be viewed, along with still-shot illustrations that such a discussion requires." Yes, but a discussion of *Kane* does not turn it into a conventional literary product; the film remains extraliterary, discussion or no. After reminding us of the shared traits of film and drama, the introduction concludes that literature "is not a closed field, though we sometimes pretend that for our own convenience."

Not a closed field? Maybe not, but a field nonetheless, one which includes *Paradise Lost* and not the Sistine Chapel. So I don't know what to make of this kissing-cousins claim, exactly, in that lots of things are related to other things—smutty limericks to "high" poetry, to name one connection—but we don't include them all under one umbrella. The title of the book still reads "Elements of Literature." not "Literature and Related Fields."

I'm not trying to knock semiotics or film study, or even suggest that the film section itself is poorly done. Quite the opposite—the film introduction, as with comments on the other four genres, is perceptively and persuasively written. Yet film is film, and an x-acto knife could come in handy about now, if you feel that film has no place in a lit book. Since this section comes last in the book, you could slit the binding and just throw the film part in the trash. Does film hurt anything by its inclusion here? No, but it wouldn't have hurt to have replaced the one hundred page *Kane* script with a novella or a wider range of contemporary poetry, either. Every inclusion is also an exclusion, even in a book as hefty as this one.

While you have the x-acto out, I have a few other things to cut away, starting with the lines on page 529 which read, "Poetry, like tennis, depends on artificial rules and hindrances. These arbitrary restrictions are what give it its game-like quality." No, no, no, a thousand times NO: poetry is not a game, it is not restrictive, it is not arbitrary.

which is why this book belongs in the imaginary lifeboat. Samples to show this are a pleasure to find and to quote. From a discussion of irony in poetry: "Disparity, contrast, incongruity—these things are at the heart of verbal irony. And, perhaps at the heart of that heart lies the notion that all words are inadequate for the representations of things." The inherent flimsiness of language is something that is not often discussed; I was surprised (pleasantly so) to find it brought up here. Or from fiction, this: "Ideally [the confrontation between text and reader] is a kind of consummation—an embrace." Yes, reading *is* sexual. (A page earlier the claim was supported that fact has no real existence "while fiction may last for centuries.") About recent poetry and the "but is it good?" question, the editors provide an art parallel:

> As with certain kinds of modern art, it is sometimes hard to separate the fraudulent from the real in contemporary poetry. If we cannot discover the intelligibility and coherence in a poem, if its images and situations do not enhance one another, we are confronted by either a fraudulent poem or a poem that is beyond us—one that we have not as yet learned how to read.

This has been true in my own life at least, and I have no problem promoting the notion with students as well: some things you can

> of the eye which, unless trained in other ways, seeks out a vanishing point lying directly ahead and to the center.

This, too, is true and not the sort of thing I would expect to find in an intro-to-lit book. Like the previous quotes, I categorize this broadly as "insight." And when it comes down to it, in any of my classes all I want students to do is to write arguments full of insights and to recognize the same when they see them.

Were I teaching strictly literary history, I wouldn't use this book. The two hundred included poems, for example, seem a lot, yet other introductory texts have twice that many. Further, film really doesn't belong here. But as many community colleges the typical intro-to-lit course is also an advanced composition course, so for those cases, this text may be perfect. It has a decent array of essays, is well-written, and is no fatter or uglier or costlier than any of the other books on the market. If this could be a model of how to write a textbook, the title could be *Elements of Writing: Design, Evidence, Metaphor, Wisdom, and Zest.* Other presses please take note.

□ *Elements of Literature: Essay, Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Film.* 4th ed. Scholes, Robert, *et al.*, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Charles Hood has an MFA in poetry, and his book of poetry, Red Sky, *was recently published by SUN/gemini Press. He has also written a book about John Wesley Powell.*

MYTHS

(Continued from Page 17)

know, Teach, this ain't high school. How come we have to take thirteen quizzes on friggin' Greek myths?"

"Gentlemen, I'm astonished by this whining," I said with an uncomfortable grin plastered on my face. "Trust me: the Greek myths are fascinating stories, which is why they'll still be read a thousand years from now."

Kennedy looked up from his ponytail and observed, "We won't be around a thousand years from now. Why don't we read something more current than ancient tales?"

I sat down on the top of the desk and looked defensively at my students. For some reason I was reminded of a National Geographic picture I had seen of a musk ox surrounded by a phalanx of hungry wolves. "My friends, if I were a touchy-feely teacher, trying desperately to keep up with the latest educational practices, I would suggest that we all get in touch with our feelings, that we delve our ethnic and social backgrounds, and that we indulge our egos with recklessly gooey abandon. We'd read stories by Alice Walker, essays by Tom Wolfe, and study the lyrics of rap music." I slapped the desk top. "But that kind of fragmented nonsense won't break down *avidya*."

"That means ignorance, right?" noted Honest Abe.

A glimmer of hope. "Yes," I replied eagerly, "it certainly does. Look, what you learn must impact the way you think and the way you see the world. I guarantee you that after reading the myths you will see yourself and

the people around you differently. Perhaps instead of seeing that burly guard out by the

FDR, the avatar of Van Gogh, spat another gob of tobacco into the trash can by his leg and suggested, "Our last teacher was able to get us some pens, and maybe you can, too."

Honest Abe asked, "And when is our textbook going to come in?"

Before I could answer, Kennedy asked, "Excuse me, Teach, but I was wondering, what did you say you got your doctorate in?"

"American Studies," I answered slowly. I glanced down at my Casio watch and noticed that it was only a quarter till 11:00.

At the back of the room, Franklin Pierce looked up. "Hey, man," he said with a smile, "I just finished reading a book about the American Presidents."

Honest Abe's withy frame turned in his seat and he said, "Now, that's a book of myths."

"Right on," added Mr. Jefferson, from under his tilted straw hat.

NOTE

[1]The quotations of the inmates, largely verbatim, are typical responses to a questionnaire that I gave them toward the end of the course. I have taught three courses at Folsom and have combined incidents and discussions from the initial class meeting in all three to create the composite session described in this article. So far, I have found the felons at Folsom Prison to be good students who have taught me many things.

Don Satterlee has taught for sixteen years in colleges, universities, public and private schools in Hawaii and California. Currently, he plays the "freeway flier" game in Northern California, driving to and from Sacramento City College, Sierra College, and Folsom Prison (through its outreach program).

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The center of my motion has shifted.
Before, if it was located anywhere,
it grew with the tall grain, was harvested,
sometimes cruelly, to seed again
in places still remote.

I travel in loops and twists past Private Roads.
Some say NO TRESPASSING, KEEP OUT
on gates that guard thoroughbreds
who in deep-eyed equine fashion
say, "welcome."

A great ocean spreads from my
neighborhood,
birds feed on my yard,
take rests on the white points of my fence
and are just as secure as myself though they
do not read or write nor are they
laboriously nice to their world.

Floods roll me to the sea.
I am suspended in the white of Moon,
sand, foam,
blazing tiaras which dazzle the black:
God is or God is not.

Life, places rise from the earth.
The events that occur can be traced to their
origin
in the lay of the land. From the center of the
center
comes the grain, the bird, the horse, the man
and the good.

ALEX DE SCHWEINITZ
Allan Hancock College

Before coming to Hancock College, Alex de Schweinitz taught at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas.

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NOTICES

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phy and Literary History." Speakers include, among many others, Maxine Hong Kingston, Galway Kinnell, Carlos Fuentes, I-Chun

3-7 March 1992. TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL TESOL (TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES) CONFERENCE. Vancouver, British Columbia.

may be contextual or theoretical and may consider the teaching of common anthology selections as well as of long poems.

Address inquiries and proposals to John Serio, Department of English, Clarkson Uni-

"That means ignorance, right?" noted Honest Abe.

A glimmer of hope. "Yes," I replied eagerly, "it certainly does. Look, what you learn must impact the way you think and the way you see the world. I guarantee you that after reading the myths you will see yourself and

the people around you differently. Perhaps instead of seeing that burly guard out by the door as a burly guard, you'll view him as Charon, the boatman of the underworld. Perhaps, instead of seeing me as the usual class tyrant, you'll view me the way Hercules viewed his music teacher, Linus." I smirked. "On second thought, that may not be such a good idea; Hercules brained Linus with the teacher's own flute."

"I had a math teacher last semester," Jefferson observed, "that I should have brained."

I continued: "The point is that learning must break down barriers. If it doesn't do that, then you are not really being educated, you're being amused. That is why we will immerse ourselves in the myths. We will use and reuse the characters and plots from the myths in all our writing assignments, on all our opportunities, and on all our tests. This is the wholeness, the continuity, I spoke about earlier." Like a sprinter at the end of a race, I paused for a breath of air and then wearily added, "End of sermon."

"I was sentenced to Folsom for twenty-six counts of Embezzlement. My sentence is forty years. I love Greek Mythology and feel that it is a great base for all learning." Kennedy

Again, the class became very restive. I knew that I had done too much talking, and my mouth felt as dry as a snake's burrow.

"When are we going to get writing paper?" wondered Adams.

So far, I have found the felons at Folsom Prison to be good students who have taught me many things.

Don Satterlee has taught for sixteen years in colleges, universities, public and private schools in Hawaii and California. Currently, he plays the "freeway flier" game in Northern California, driving to and from Sacramento City College, Sierra College, and Folsom Prison (through its outreach program).

[illegible] say, "welcome."

A great ocean spreads from my
neighborhood,
birds feed on my yard,
take rests on the white points of my fence
and are just as secure as myself though they
do not read or write nor are they
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For information write MLA, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003-6981.

4-7 January 1992. CCCC (CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION) WINTER WORKSHOP. Sheraton Sand Key Resort, Clearwater Beach, Florida.

Theme: "Exploring Dimensions of Diversity in Writing Classrooms." Topics for the three workshop days are "Acknowledging Human Differences," "Understanding Cultural Diversity," and "Encouraging Individual Voices." Enrollment is limited to 150 persons.

The registration fee of $285 includes tuition, workshop materials, coffee service, social hours, banquet, and three luncheons. The Sheraton Sand Key is offering special rates for registrants: $73 per day, single, and $77 per day, double. For registration materials write Membership Service Representative, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

14-16 February 1992. DANGEROUS LIAISONS? A CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE, FILM, AND VIDEO. University of Southern California.

For information write Roger Anderson, Department of English, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0354.

3-7 March 1992. TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL TESOL (TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES) CONFERENCE. Vancouver, British Columbia.

For information write TESOL, Inc., 1600 Cameron Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314.

19-21 March 1992. 1992 CCCC (CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION) CONVENTION. Clarion Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio.

According to Ann Ruggles Gere, the 1992 Program Chair, the conference theme—Contexts, Communities, and Constraints: Sites of Composing and Communicating—"calls attention to the contexts in which we teach and do research; to the overlapping communities with which we, our students, and our colleagues identify; and to the constraints that create positive and negative tensions in our professional lives."

For information and registration, write NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS AND PROPOSALS

TEACHING WALLACE STEVENS

DEADLINE: 31 DECEMBER 1991. John N. Serio and B.J. Leggett are editing a collection entitled *Teaching Wallace Stevens: Practical Essays* as part of the Tennessee Studies in Literature. The editors invite essays on any aspect of teaching the poet; studies may be contextual or theoretical and may consider the teaching of common anthology selections as well as of long poems.

Address inquiries and proposals to John Serio, Department of English, Clarkson University, Potsdam, NY 13699-5750.

BHARATI MUKHERJEE

DEADLINE: 7 FEBRUARY 1992. Emmanuel S. Nelson invites contributions for a volume on Bharati Mukherjee. Essays may focus on the intersections of ethnicity, gender, and post-colonialism in Mukherjee's texts; consider her works in the contexts of immigrant cultures in Canada and the United States and in the larger framework of Indian diasporic writing; or assess Mukherjee as a novelist, short-story writer, autobiographer, literary critic, and sociopolitical commentator and essayist.

One-page abstracts are due by 7 February 1992, and completed manuscripts of not more than twenty-five pages by 15 April 1992.

Direct inquiries, abstracts, and manuscripts to Emmanuel Nelson, Department of English, State University College of New York, Cortland, NY 13045.

ENGLISH COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA TWO-YEAR COLLEGES — CALIFORNIA REPUBLIC — ECCTYC

inside english

Vol. XIX, No. 3 | Journal of the English Council of California Two-Year Colleges | March 1992

INSIDE

inside english:

ECCTYC
Looks at Teaching
Writing at All Levels

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A veteran teacher of writing shares his wisdom: structure triumphs. Page 3

A chance meeting with her blind student opens a new way of seeing for instructor Janet Goldberg. Page 6

Through keeping dialectical journals, Sheila Thorne's literature students develop critical thinking skills. Page 7

One-to-one conferencing offers instructor Virginia Duym opportunities to encourage and to respond to individual voices in freshman composition. Page 10

Like Winnie-the-Pooh, a conscien-

MODIFYING TEACHING BEHAVIOR

Encouraging Critical Thinking in a Composition Class

by JUDITH ROSE
Los Angeles Trade Technical College

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is adapted from "Getting the Right Answer Isn't Everything: A Look at Teacher Behavior," in *The Power of Context*, Faye Pietzman, ed. LA: CAIP, 1989.

Place: A community college composition class at the end of the semester.

Gary: You mean we can leave out words and rearrange words to make the sentence correct? I didn't realize that until now.

Teacher's Journal Entry: He had spent all this time revising drafts, rewriting sentences, working in peer groups, yet he didn't catch on until today that it's in his power to use language to make sense.

So it's not enough to tell 'em they have power, to show 'em how to do it, to lead 'em to think . . . looks like it takes a semester of the right atmosphere till they begin to see that they

new instructional modes, described below, created the necessary structure for turning most class work into opportunities for critical thinking.

Revising Essays

An elongated writing process involving many revisions, during which I act as a consultant, provides students with decision-making opportunities unavailable to them in the traditional "write-it-out/turn-it-in" assignments. Students receive questions rather than topics to write on. As they talk to each other to find answers, the machinery of critical questioning begins. Although I read and comment on all versions of their papers, only the final revision receives a grade.

Working in Groups

As often as possible, I encourage—even require—students to work in groups on papers, tests and quizzes, and peer evaluation of essays. When students know in advance that they will be doing group work, they enter the class more purposefully, as if they do not need the teacher, and immediately being graded. And someone important—the teacher—is asking for their opinions. I provide questionnaires of all kinds. Occasionally, I ask students to evaluate their own work or other students' work, write about their writing process, give their opinion on assignments, and make selections of reading materials. They know that such written work will not receive a letter grade but that I do think it important, so they should write their best.

Keeping Journals

Asking for students' opinions on questionnaires led me to develop what has become a regular, integral part of all my writing classes: the required reading journal. I encourage students to express their opinions on what they read, using Audre Allison's inviting unfinished sentences called "Wonderings and Wanderings" (Perl and Wilson, Chapter 2). Through this, they understand that their opinions are important to me.

I am convinced that students gain not only an appreciation of literature through their own discoveries but also a greater sense of self-worth and autonomy. One stu-

Page 3

A chance meeting with her blind student opens a new way of seeing for instructor Janet Goldberg. Page 6

Through keeping dialectical journals, Sheila Thorne's literature students develop critical thinking skills. Page 7

One-to-one conferencing offers instructor Virginia Duym opportunities to encourage and to respond to individual voices in freshman composition. Page 10

Like Winnie-the-Pooh, a conscientious composition teacher found something she wasn't looking for, which turned out to be what she was looking for. Page 13

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Gary: You mean we can leave out words and rearrange words to make the sentence correct? I didn't realize that until now.

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So it's not enough to tell 'em they have power, to show 'em how to do it, to lead 'em to think . . . looks like it takes a semester of the right atmosphere till they begin to see that they can do it for themselves.

One semester I participated in a "teacher as researcher" seminar at UCLA. For my project, I looked intensively at both my modes of instruction and my teaching behaviors that worked either to inhibit or enhance my students' critical thinking and writing abilities. By discovering what I actually say to students, I hoped to achieve greater congruence between my stated goals and my actual classroom behavior and, thereby, become a better teacher. By focusing on those times when my students responded critically on their own, I hoped to find out what triggers those responses—what I do and say in class that frees students to think for themselves, what I must stop doing, and which modes of instruction and assignments promote their thinking and writing critically.

MODES OF INSTRUCTION THAT ENCOURAGE CRITICAL THINKING

When I first began to observe myself and my students, with the goal to improve my ways of responding, I did not expect to make changes in my modes of instruction. But working with others in the UCLA seminar led me to make instructional changes that required students to revise essays, work in groups, answer questionnaires, and keep reading journals. These traditional "write-it-out/turn-it-in" assignments. Students receive questions rather than topics to write on. As they talk to each other to find answers, the machinery of critical questioning begins. Although I read and comment on all versions of their papers, only the final revision receives a grade.

Working in Groups

As often as possible, I encourage—even require—students to work in groups on papers, tests and quizzes, and peer evaluation of essays. When students know in advance that they will be doing group work, they enter the class more purposefully, as if they do not need the teacher, and immediately

begin working together. But group work does have a pitfall: Just as I often interfere too quickly to make certain a student has the right answer, stronger students in a group have the same tendency to help the weaker or lazier students who then get credit for work they have not done. However, monitoring the groups can obviate this.

Answering Questionnaires

My asking students to express their opinions on questionnaires frees them to write happily, amply, and eagerly, for they aren't

Keeping Journals

Asking for students' opinions on questionnaires led me to develop what has become a regular, integral part of all my writing classes: the required reading journal. I encourage students to express their opinions on what they read, using Audre Allison's inviting unfinished sentences called "Wonderings and Wanderings" (Perl and Wilson, Chapter 2). Through this, they understand that their opinions are important to me.

I am convinced that students gain not only an appreciation of literature through their own discoveries but also a greater sense of self-worth and autonomy. One student told me, "You make us feel like persons." Another said, "No one has ever asked me my opinion before." I suspect that the dynamic goes something like this: The student thinks, "My opinion is important," which becomes, "What I think is important," which becomes, "What I write is important." Knowing that I listen to them and value their opinions, perhaps they hear me better.

These instructional modes have helped my own style evolve. Just as they free students to take responsibility for themselves, they free me to become the kind of teacher I always had in mind.

(ENCOURAGING CRITICAL THINKING, Continued on Page 4)

ENGLISH COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA TWO-YEAR COLLEGES
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Letters

"LOVE POEM"

Though I too was charmed by John Frederick Nims' "Love Poem," and am sure that Melinda Barth's students appreciate her infectious enthusiasm for it, I was immediately skeptical of her claim that "No student has ever failed to grasp the simple but not simplistic point of the poem" ["All Nimsy Were the Bulls and Burs" December 1991:3]. Nor could I help but note that Barth's assertion was followed immediately by an explanation of the poem's meaning—some indication that she is not altogether convinced that all her readers share her students' level of comprehension.

As the editor of what is probably the most user-friendly anthology of contemporary poetry in print, *The Maverick Poets*, I am always interested in the issue of accessibility, so the very day I read the article I brought the poem in to my writing-about-literature classes. The timing couldn't have been more perfect: my students were just completing several weeks devoted exclusively to poetry. I asked them to answer three questions: What is the poem saying? How easy or difficult do you find it? and To what degree do you find it interesting or enjoyable?

Of thirty-three students, nineteen demonstrated they understood it to some degree, if only marginally, while fourteen decidedly did not understand it at all. Twelve thought it relatively easy to understand; twenty-one thought it difficult. Twenty-one claimed to have enjoyed the poem; twelve claimed they hadn't. However, while somewhat more than 40 percent of my students didn't understand it at all, many who did grasp the general idea readily admitted that there were passages that they didn't get. On the other hand, many of those who hadn't the foggiest notion of what the poem was about assured me that they had enjoyed it.

I don't believe that many teachers of literature will be surprised at these results or with my contention that the author was letting her enthusiasm color her perceptions. Nonetheless, I'm sure Melinda Barth would have been pleased with the response of one of my students who wrote: "I found the poem terribly interesting because of the sweetness in the tone of his writing describing her clumsy nature. It's not like a typical love poem and that's what I like most." That remark, echoing Barth's similar delight, pleased me a good deal but I was also pleased that two students thought the poem had something to do with an alcoholic—which may, when all is said and done, be a brilliantly perceptive intuition about the latent content of the poem. My favorite response, however, was also the most laconic: "I liked the poem. The language is clear. I believe it is about a baby." Excellent! Next week we move on to "The Pisan Cantos"!

STEVE KOWIT
Southwestern College

HE/SHE

I just returned from my office where I found the December issue of *inside english* with my article ["More Thoughts on Teaching Poetry" 3]. I am very pleased with the results.

I did notice that my use of the common gender *he* was changed to read *she*. I much prefer that to the cumbersome *he/she* that so many publications insist on using. I really wish that someone will soon coin an acceptable non-sexist common gender pronoun.

HARRY TEITELBAUM
Saddleback College

inside english

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FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of *inside english* focuses on what most of us do each day in our classes: teach writing. Whether in composition, literature, or creative writing courses, we spend most of our teaching lives helping students express their ideas on paper.

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However, we use various methods to teach students the skill of written expression, each

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Send poems to Robert Rippy, *inside english* Poetry Editor, San Bernardino Valley College, 701 So. Mt. Vernon Avenue, San Bernardino, CA 92403. Send all other submissions to Barbara Bilson Woodruff, *inside english* Editor, Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90405.

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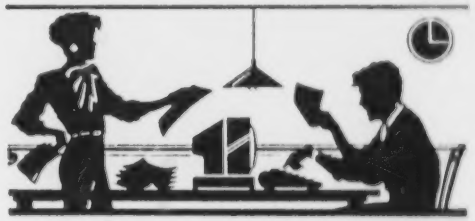
Saddleback College

FROM THE EDITOR



This issue of *inside english* focuses on what most of us do each day in our classes—teach writing. Whether in composition, literature, or creative writing courses, we spend most of our teaching lives helping students express their ideas on paper.

However, we use various methods to teach students the skill of written expression, each of us hoping that we have found the best way—or at least a workable way—to achieve our goals. Some of us rely on the traditional modes of discourse, teaching students the difference between a narrative about hunting and an analysis of an argument against hunting or the way to construct a comparison of two poems about baseball. Others of us shun the rhetorical modes and allow students to develop essays in whatever mode they find best suits their subject. Some of us take students step by step through the writing process—from thesis to outline to paragraph to essay; others emphasize brainstorming and drafting. Some of us require multiple revisions; others of us require none.

Whatever approach we take in teaching writing, we will find an expression of it in the pages of this issue. Judith Rose presents an inductive method that she finds promotes critical thinking in writing; Harry Teitelbaum prefers the traditional modes of discourse and moving from paragraph to essay. Conferencing, a method used by many instructors, plays a critical role in Virginia Duym's composition strategy. And Alison Kuehner uses model essays by both students and professional writers to great success in her classes. Sheila Thorne, La Vergne Rosow, and Dr. Jo-Anne Cappeluti have found other approaches that work well with their students.

Many of us, however, take issue with some of these teaching strategies. Therefore, the May 1992 issue of *i.e.* will continnue this look at teaching writing as it is taught in all classes. Let's hear your responses to the methods presented in this issue. Let's hear from those of you who use literature to teach composition, who use composition to teach literature, who teach fiction writing in composition classes and composition in creative writing classes. Do you formally teach critical thinking in your composition classes? In creative writing? Which traditional or innovative strategies work for you? Which ones have you tried and discarded? Which books inspire your teaching, provide methods and ideas? Which have proven unsuitable for you or your students?

As one of the book reviews in this issue makes clear, the dialogue about how best to teach writing continues and will continue for decades to come. Meanwhile, we grope for ways to help our students put their thoughts into words and form those words into essays that are clear, cogent, and critically sound. Let us share our search and our discoveries on the pages *inside english* to the end of developing our and our students' ability to write with style, judgment, depth, and care.

BARBARA BILSON WOODRUFF
Santa Monica College

SAUSAGES AND PEARLS

Teaching the Powerless "I"

by JO-ANNE CAPPELUTI
Fullerton College

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Cappeluti adapted the following article from the presentation she gave at the ECCTYC Statewide Conference, 24-25 October 1991.

Once upon a time I came across two theories of education: sausage stuffing and pearl cultivating (Harris 273-274). According to the first theory, students are empty sausage casings; education is what we stuff inside of them. According to the second theory, students are oysters; education is the grain of sand that gets in and, in irritating the tissue, enables the oyster to produce a pearl.

The metaphors have lived in my mind for years. Sometimes, in fact, I find myself standing in front of a class smiling as I picture either one.

In terms of writing classes, more specifically, I would like to look at the difference it makes to use the second of these two theories, because I believe that the main problem with teaching—and learning—college writing is that for one reason or another students are often perceived—indeed, often prefer to perceive themselves—as sausage casings. The title of my essay is now, no doubt, becoming clear: the powerless "I" is one who, like a sausage casing, is powerless because it isn't called upon to do anything with the materials stuffed into it. The resulting "products" are students whose only question is "What do you want?"—students who never even conceive of the possibility that it is up to them to make something (*i.e.*, a pearl) of the assignment other than a regurgitated report of what the teacher said.

I would argue, then, that the sausage-casing approach to writing actually contradicts what writing is all about. To write is in an essential way to be the author of ("Out of myself I have written a book," says Montaigne)—to be, in other words, the one who cultivates that pearly essay, unlike the sausage casing who can never be the author of anything.

Over the last seven years I have found ways to break the sausage syndrome, ways which, not incidentally, take the primary load off the teacher and put it onto (or rather into) the student.

To begin with, I teach the thesis as an arguable assertion, and although "arguability" is indeed a complex notion, I approach it initially by telling students what they are NOT allowed to do (here, I guess, their sausage-casing training comes in handy; they are used to taking orders).

"You are not allowed to write three-part thesis statements in this class," I announce. "Moreover, you cannot use any form of the verb *to be* in your thesis statement." At this point I see great anxiety: to begin with, they want an exhaustive list of the verb *to be*, and then the deeper concern takes hold as they consider the unfathomable void of writing an essay without using the three-part thesis statement.

"But that's how we were trained," they mourn.

"Okay. Let's look at an example. 'Missing my senior prom affected me emotionally, socially, and academically.' What are the logical connections between, say, 'emotionally' and 'socially'?"

No clue.

"Would you say, then, that this kind of thesis statement allows you to list and/or report a self-evident statement rather than argue?"

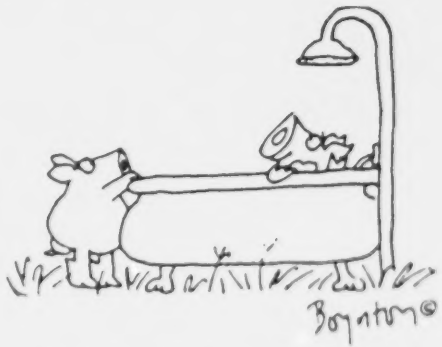
Small glimmers of recognition.

"Would you say, in fact, that this kind of thesis statement leaves you no other connection between paragraphs other than words like 'another,' 'also,' 'next,' et cetera?"

At this point they begin to suspect that I might know what I'm talking about.

"But what *is* there to argue?" one daring student asks.

Now I turn their attention towards an activity with which they are already familiar: listing. Beginning with the premise that we do not start out knowing what we have to say, I redefine listing as an activity that allows the brain to suggest all sorts of seemingly unrelated items. I then suggest that an arguable thesis comes from responding to incongruity, problem, puzzle, paradox, or conflict.



"NOT THE USUAL HOGWASH!"

Rather than ignore what does not seem to fit, then, we address it; problem, after all, is the necessary irritant, which stimulates that long dormant but still vital intellectual muscle.

Thus in one section of my freshman composition class at California State University, Fullerton, I witnessed my students' first successes with argumentation. Working on an assignment that asked for a cause and effect thesis analyzing their decision to come to college, Tom found an interesting conflict on his list: he came to college because he wants a career, yet he also came because he hates to work. After I asked him to play with those two items in cause and effect relationships, he developed an arguable thesis: "Realizing that I came to college because I hate to work intensified my motivation to come to college to prepare for a career that I would enjoy working at."

Contrast that statement to the standard,

(THE POWERLESS "I",
Continued on Page 11)

A SUCCESSFUL APPROACH TO TEACHING WRITING

Will They Ever Learn To Write?

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by HARRY TEITELBAUM
Saddleback College

with correct and effective sentences and then to expand these principles and concepts to develop a multi-paragraph essay. I agree with Dr. Louise Rorabacher that four essential elements

of the message and an intended receiver using a common language. I stress how readily misunderstanding occurs without that common language—for example, body language and gestures, especially in social settings. The writer's desire to communicate his message to his reader, his desire to please his audience and have them read and understand the message, is the "basic law of rhetoric" (Winkler and McCuen 5). And rhetoric can most effectively be mastered by an understanding of basic struc-

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are often perceived—indeed, often prefer to perceive themselves—as sausage casings. The title of my essay is now, no doubt, becoming clear: the powerless "I" is one who, like a sausage casing, is powerless because it isn't called upon to do anything with the materials stuffed into it. The resulting "products" are

"You are not allowed to write three-part thesis statements in this class," I announce. "Moreover, you cannot use any form of the verb *to be* in your thesis statement." At this point I see great anxiety: to begin with, they want an exhaustive list of the verb *to be*, and then the deeper concern takes hold as

listing. Beginning with the premise that we do not start out knowing what we have to say, I redefine listing as an activity that allows the brain to suggest all sorts of seemingly unrelated items. I then suggest that an arguable thesis comes from responding to incongruity, problem, puzzle, paradox, or conflict.

that I came to college because I hate to work intensified my motivation to come to college to prepare for a career that I would enjoy working at."

Contrast that statement to the standard,

(THE POWERLESS "I", Continued on Page 11)

A SUCCESSFUL APPROACH TO TEACHING WRITING

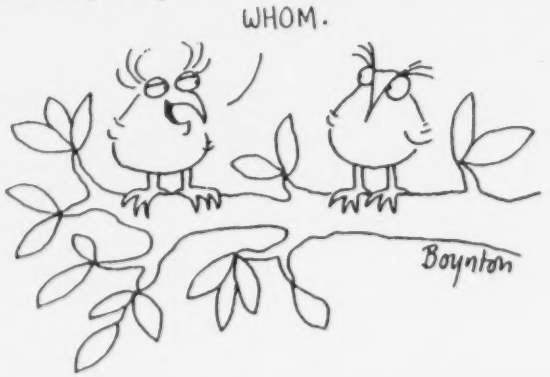
Will They Ever Learn To Write?

by **HARRY TEITELBAUM**
Saddleback College

If only I had a magic wand to wave over their heads and say, "Poof! You are now all writers." But, unfortunately, everyone who has ever attempted to teach writing to college freshmen knows that no such panacea exists. Rather, the teaching of writing is a time-consuming, painstaking process, many times frustrating and seemingly hopeless. But based on my over thirty years as a teacher, I can give a resoundingly affirmative answer to the question raised in the title.

There are basically two approaches to teaching writing. One, the cathartic approach, stresses getting one's thoughts and ideas on paper without concerning oneself too much about structure, spelling, and grammar, or, at best, paying some perfunctory attention to these matters later. This "let it all hang out" approach, especially popular during the seventies, considered attention to mechanics and structure too conformist. Unfortunately, too many of these writings proved totally unintelligible. "An effective essay, like a well-built house, must have a firm structural foundation and sound materials . . . . These do not limit our creative ability. Instead, . . . they act as support, liberating our imagination, to discover new approaches and fresh insights" (Rorabacher xix). A modified version of this approach, and, in my opinion, a more valid one, focuses on the whole rather than on the parts. Here, too, students are urged to get all their thoughts on paper without too much concern about the mechanics. After ample writing opportunities, they are gradually exposed to sentence structure, paragraphing, diction, and the like.

The other approach to teaching writing, more specifically expository writing, is the building method favored by many. It emphasizes organization and structure as the means to the end. Students first learn to write unified, coherent paragraphs with correct and effective sentences and then to expand these principles and concepts to develop a multi-paragraph essay. I agree with Dr. Louise Rorabacher that four essential elements comprise effective writing: content (something to say), logical organization, appropriate diction and sentence and paragraph structure, and mechanical correctness (standard grammar, spelling, punctuation) (4-5). For, regardless how great one's thoughts, one cannot communicate them to a reader without the last three elements. Over the years I have been using essentially this approach with a reasonable degree of success in teaching writing.



First, I attempt to overcome students' reluctance to write. Most of those enrolled in freshman English are not there by choice; they would rather be any place else. Many have written no more than a half dozen themes in high school and have no interest in writing any more. We begin by talking about the function of language—body language, sign language, gestures, semaphore, Morse code—eventually concluding that language is used to communicate. The class, with some prodding by me, decides that effective communication requires a sender of the message and an intended receiver using a common language. I stress how readily misunderstanding occurs without that common language—for example, body language and gestures, especially in social settings. The writer's desire to communicate his message to his reader, his desire to please his audience and have them read and understand the message, is the "basic law of rhetoric" (Winkler and McCuen 5). And rhetoric can most effectively be mastered by an understanding of basic structure and mechanics. At this point I tell students that although they cannot *learn* to be great writers—that requires special talents, like being a great artist—they can learn to be competent communicators of their ideas if they are willing to work at it. They need to understand that there are no shortcuts to learning to write, that it takes time and effort.

THE WRITING PROCESS

Step one in the writing process is having something to write about. For some reason, most students maintain that they lead a totally dull existence, that nothing exciting ever happened or happens to them. "But I have nothing to say," they complain. I ask them what they think about AIDS, about casual sex, about personal ads, about requiring courses, about the fall of Communism, about DUI, about digital watches, about their professor—in short, about anything and everything. And, yes, I am interested in their thoughts and ideas. I first assign them, then, to start a list of potential topics, a list they add to constantly and refer to when they have to write.

In step two I introduce the expository paragraph. I usually approach this by asking them how they would go about building a shed in their backyards. After fielding a variety of answers such as pour the foundation, get the materials, hire someone, pick a location, I finally find someone who tells us that first we must ascertain the purpose of the shed, then we must draw up careful plans, and *then* we can pour the foundation. In comparing this to paragraph structure, the students slowly realize that one cannot, for the most part, write an effective, well-structured paragraph without first having a purpose and a plan.

(WILL THEY EVER LEARN?, Continued on Page 12)

ENCOURAGING CRITICAL THINKING

(Continued from Page 4)

> can't think of anything to write about, I have some suggestions on a sheet of paper, but I don't recommend them.

These preliminary papers were more interesting than usual, and no one used the suggestion sheet.

At the next class meeting, to introduce my reading of Richard Wright's "Library Card" in *In Charge*, I put five words on the chalkboard: *hearsay, advocating, denunciation, Kluxer, bookish*. Then I asked,

> How many of you have heard an English teacher say, when giving a reading assignment, "If you don't understand a word in what you're reading, look it up in a dictionary?" [Most students nodded and raised their hands.] Are you ready to unlearn that now? [All shook their heads affirmatively; some looked surprised, others smiled.] I recommend, I advise you, not to do it. I've said the same thing to my students in the past. I think it's because we teachers don't stop to think about how we learned most of the new words we came across. If I had actually done that while I read as a youngster, I would have thrown book and dictionary on the floor in frustration. In this class, in most cases, just skip the word you don't understand. You'll probably get the meaning anyway. Since I'm going to read aloud, I picked out a few words that I think may sound unknown. We won't discuss any of them. I'm doing this because there's a difference between how words sound and how they look.

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By continually explaining my motives, I model for students how to explain themselves as they write and speak. Furthermore, they get the message that we are all members of that sophisticated group from that loss in that I'm tired.

Others shared their stories with the class. Krista and Shayna said that my anecdote enabled them to consider their lives differently. Shayna recounted her sacrifices, but her goal was not clear. Krista, with much self-effacement, told me her story, not thinking it worthy, focusing on her goals but unable to think in terms of sacrifices. "What are you missing out on?" I asked Krista. Her face lit up as we simultaneously understood what I was talking about. I added to the prompt already on the board: "What did you miss out on?" As Krista continued talking and explaining, I continued the prompt: "Did you compensate for your sacrifices later?"

Krista said, "I couldn't really understand this until I started talking about it."

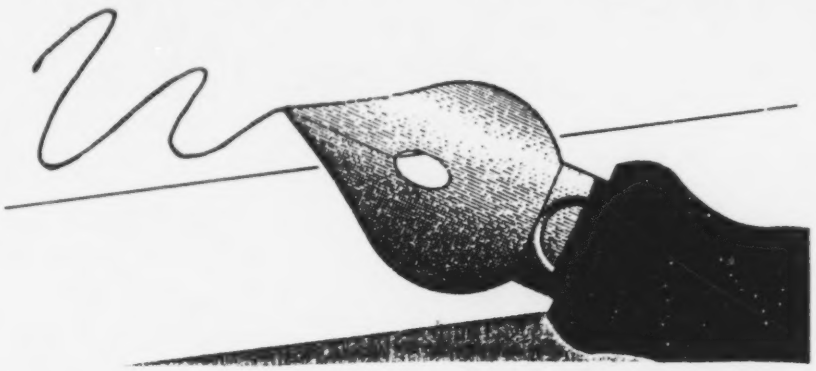
I answered, "Our talk just now gave me some additional ideas of ways of thinking about this assignment that I had been groping for."

Thinking about my teaching style, reading through my logs and lesson plans, I see that I work inductively. I gave no instructions on structure or organization on these first papers, yet they were uniformly well-organized, probably because the question-form prompt encouraged clear organization, and the peer evaluations they wrote encouraged revision. This inductive style is effective—allowing the writers to learn by dis-

IMPROVING TEACHING TECHNIQUES

Although changes in teaching style are difficult to make, I try hard to take the following advice whenever I meet a class:

1. Do not revise or expand on students' answers; accept them as a given.
2. Avoid using tutoring techniques in group situations; do not hint and prompt.
3. Encourage students to help each other.
4. If students cannot find an answer without help, show them where to find it.



5. Give the correct answer rather than hint at it.
6. If the desired response is not given, at times it is better to accept any answer as sufficient.
7. Instead of repeating the student's correct answer to a group, ask the student or someone else in the group to repeat it.
8. Encourage the entire class to consider and evaluate a student's answer, asking "Are you satisfied with that answer?" This gives recognition to the students instead of the students' looking to the teacher for confirmation.

At the end of the semester I told the class that I was stuck; I wanted to find out whether my classroom manipulations had had the desired effect, but I did not know how to get at that result. I wondered out loud whether critical thinking can be taught. What did they had struggled together to understand Bettelheim's *Uses of Enchantment*. In the excerpt we had read, his thesis is that when listening to fairy tales, children identify with the heroes, internalize the values in the tales, and learn the possibilities that are available to them in dealing with the existential processes of life.

I think what Jacqui meant is that she and her classmates were exposed to and learned new possibilities of thinking and gained the confidence to think independently, and that such learning occurred unconsciously as they internalized the values of autonomous thinking that I fostered and encouraged in class. We appreciated that her example was critical thinking in action.

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Judith Rose continues to explore methods of teaching in her composition and literature classes and writes poetry, often published in inside english.

THE PHOTOGRAPH

for Fred

Our daugher sits
still as sunlight
on the bench
and crosses her ankles.
She is learning Spanish,
each day a new word
memorized, each day
yesterday's word forgotten.

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She is learning

have thrown book and dictionary on the floor in frustration. In this class, in most cases, just skip the word you don't understand. You'll probably get the meaning anyway. Since I'm going to read aloud, I picked out a few words that I think may sound unknown. We won't discuss any of them. I'm doing this because there's a difference between how words sound and how they look.

By continually explaining my motives, I model for students how to explain themselves as they write and speak. Furthermore, they get the message that we are all members of that sophisticated group that learns words from context and that when we need a dictionary, we will know it. (During a writing workshop session five weeks later, I heard a student say, "Hey, I need a better dictionary." Another asked me if I have a thesaurus in class and where she can buy one.)

In the third class session, after a discussion of "Library Card," students formed into small groups to discuss and prepare to write about sacrificing for a goal. A few minutes after they started talking, Krista and Shayna called me over. "I've never sacrificed anything," Shayna said. "I led a sheltered life. My parents always anticipated my needs." Krista nodded in agreement. Thinking others might have the same difficulty focusing on their lives from this point of view, I shared with the class an example from my own life:

> Some of us have trouble recognizing as sacrifice actions we've taken. I think we can't get past a certain age, perhaps eleven or twelve, without noticing we suffer from a lack and then try to get what we want. Last summer I needed an extra four thousand dollars, so I taught summer school. I liked doing it, loved my students, but having to give up summer vacation made each day somewhat of a chore rather than a pleasure. And I'm still sort of suffering

Krista said, "I couldn't really understand this until I started talking about it."

I answered, "Our talk just now gave me some additional ideas of ways of thinking about this assignment that I had been groping for."

Thinking about my teaching style, reading through my logs and lesson plans, I see that I work inductively. I gave no instructions on structure or organization on these first papers, yet they were uniformly well-organized, probably because the question-form prompt encouraged clear organization, and the peer evaluations they wrote encouraged revision. This inductive style is effective—allowing the writers to learn by discovery, to reinvent rhetorical wheels, to produce well-organized papers.

When I admit that I am wrong, students immediately sense that I am their partner in learning. Sometimes I am able to enlist them in creating an assignment. For example, once I gave a book review assignment and, upon reflection, told them,

> Don't write your book reports at home because I'm not satisfied with the questions I gave you on the handout last week. They're textbookish teacher questions. The last couple of days I've been thinking about other kinds of questions as I've been reading for my teacher/researcher project.

Robin, the most articulate and well-read student, said, "I want to put myself into the report." Others chimed in after her with their suggestions.

My remarks were not calculated, but I believe that this kind of talk and my prominently displayed sign "YOUR TEACHER MAY BE WRONG, THINK FOR YOURSELF" set the tone for freedom and autonomous thinking. On the other hand, as I have shown, certain unplanned yet characteristic responses to students do inhibit thinking. To lessen their stifling effects, I recommend to myself to talk less in class. I have noted this before, as have former students on class evaluations.

times it is better to accept any answer as sufficient.

7. Instead of repeating the student's correct answer to a group, ask the student or someone else in the group to repeat it.

8. Encourage the entire class to consider and evaluate a student's answer, asking "Are you satisfied with that answer?" This gives recognition to the students instead of the students' looking to the teacher for confirmation.

At the end of the semester I told the class that I was stuck; I wanted to find out whether my classroom manipulations had had the desired effect, but I did not know how to get at that result. I wondered out loud whether critical thinking can be taught. What did they think? To help them focus on whether they had thought critically for themselves to solve a problem, I asked if they had questioned the authority of someone they admired and trusted. As the students gave examples, I kept repeating my questions and doubts: "But is that teachable?" "Can that be learned?" "What conditions in a classroom foster that kind of thinking?" "Which of the assignments required critical thinking?"

Finally the students dealt with my concerns. They felt that critical thinking happens while doing group work. (On an earlier questionnaire, almost all wrote that peer group work stimulated them to think because they were able to compare their ideas to those of others in the group, that they were encouraged by peers to develop their ideas, and that in group revision work—as distinct from group discussions—they learned to value others' opinions.) They added that an important teacher behavior is to seek students' opinions.

Students believed that critical thinking can be taught, although they could not quite tell me how until Jacqui offered the following: She couldn't document learning how to think critically while that type of learning is occurring. She compared such learning to the effect that hearing fairy tales has on the young child. We all grinned at this comparison, for we

Linda Thomas continues to explore methods of teaching in her composition and literature classes and writes poetry, often published in inside english.

THE PHOTOGRAPH

for Fred

Our daugher sits
still as sunlight
on the bench
and crosses her ankles.
She is learning Spanish,
each day a new word
memorized, each day
yesterday's word forgotten.

She is learning
to take pictures.
This morning
she photographed the cemetery,
the square of grass
and the fallen leaf,
in compositions small
as her hands, and forgotten.

Who can guess what she forgets?
—our girl,
our old heart
carved in the bench.

Just now I read to her
the chapter called
"Depth of Field." Now
she aims the lens,
twists the aperture,
adjusts for the years,
and stares at this grass
freshly cut, at this tree
sprung out of your toes,
at this stone we assume
marks your head. And
when she lets go the shutter
you bloom
out of the dark bath,
a photograph
she can't recognize,
a face I can't forget.

LINDA THOMAS
Irvine Valley College

A STUDENT'S LIFE, A STUDENT'S FEARS, A STUDENT'S WRITING

Flowers

by JANET GOLDBERG
Vista College, Golden Gate University

As the escalator lifted me from the bright fluorescence of the train station to the darkness of downtown Berkeley, I saw a man walking alongside the glass walls of a bank, tapping his long white stick on the pavement. He continued walking until his stick struck the door of a darkened bookstore. He stopped, turned, and walked back toward where he had come from, this time his arm stretched out in front of him, his palm apparently reaching for something familiar.

As I approached him, I noticed several people sitting on benches, their backs hunched as they waited anxiously for their particular buses. None of them showed any apparent interest in helping the blind man gain his bearing. Not long ago, I had seen a man chase a woman from these benches, down the street, into an alley. No one had wanted to get involved then either. Now I shivered, not just because it was chilly, but because I sensed this neighborhood was becoming too dangerous.

What was I doing there? Like most part-time college instructors, I teach at several colleges. So, on Tuesdays and Thursdays I travel from Berkeley to Alameda to Berkeley to San Francisco then finally home to Berkeley—all on public transportation.

Closer now, I recognized the man's stiff grayish black hair and the shape of his dark sunglasses.

"George," I said, "it's Janet, your English instructor." I touched his arm. He stopped suddenly and lifted his chin to me. With a puzzled look he asked, "What are you doing out this time of night?"

I told him that I taught a night class in San Francisco. "Are you lost?" I chuckled,

ness, I was privy to another side of his personality. Sometimes, either before or after class, he complained to me how difficult it was simply to write a sentence. Shaking his head in frustration or stubbornness, George might say, "It's too hard. I can't do it!" Then, offhandedly, "Maybe I should just give it up." Sometimes I felt as if he were egging me on. But no matter how much encouragement I gave George, he still doubted his ability. He listened politely to my advice, yet I often felt that in his mind my advice didn't apply to him—that he was beyond help. No doubt, George was stubborn. In his writing sample from the beginning of the semester, George wrote:

> I like to start writing again. I hope it's not too late, at my age and after a bout of cancer. I don't feel sorry for myself, only in my poor writing. I tell you, it took an entire day just to compose this paragraph and still I'm not satisfied. The problem lies in my stubborn attitude—a thoughtful resolute to be perfect.

It's interesting to note that George never once blamed his writing difficulties on his blindness. And though I often wondered what it would be like to compose thoughts on a Braille Writer and not be able to *see* those thoughts, I didn't initially attribute his difficulties to his blindness. Perhaps this reflected my insensitivity or my ignorance, or more realistically, my lack of time to consider George's disability when I was burdened with correcting seventy-five student essays a week in addition to prepping for classes.

Another time, George caught me in the hall and declared that one of my assignments was too hard. "This is an English 250 class," he stuttered slightly in his excitement, "and you're making us write essays?"

"That's true," I admitted, not justifying my assignments nor giving in to George's exasper-

I hadn't expected the narrator to walk out. In fact, the ending shocked me. At first I thought that George simply didn't know how or where to end the essay, perhaps got tired and tacked on a concluding paragraph just to finish it. Now when I think about the essay, I realize the gravity of the narrator's frustration, that his inability to choose between so many objects of beauty drove him simply to leave, to escape making an impossible choice.

What was George's relationship to his narrator? I couldn't help but wonder. How might the narrator's inability to choose be related to George's frustration with his writing? To his stubbornness? To his idea of perfection? In his writing sample at the beginning of the semester, George wrote:

> Everytime I completed a sentence, I read back and think of another opening line to replace the first. Sometimes, it may be a sharper word or phrase but, whatever, the newer sentence always turned out to be worst than the original. So the entire page has to be discarded and I started over again, painfully.

After I reread this section of George's sample, I discovered a possible connection, and I wished I had seen it before the class had ended. Like the narrator in the flower essay, George found the selection of words and the organization of those words into sentences so difficult that he was easily defeated and had to "discard" the draft and start again, "painfully." No doubt, most if not all writers struggle through this process. However, for George the pain seemed much keener. The narrator in the flower story suddenly walks out, defeated, not because he hates what he

sees but because the beauty of the flowers makes it impossible for him to select.

This strikes me as different from the common student complaint, "It never comes out right on paper." This student usually has some confusion about what he really wants to communicate to the reader. George, on the other hand, seemed to know exactly what he wanted to say, yet could not bring himself to choose.

"Let me help you," I said, gripping George's elbow.

"Thanks," he nodded and stepped onto the escalator. As I watched him descend, I almost called out to him, wondering if he needed help finding his train. But I didn't. Before leaving, I leaned over the railing and watched George make his way past the flower stand to the gate. No doubt, he took this route everyday.

Janet Goldberg has poetry forthcoming in the Bellingham Review *and the* Nevada City Literary Review.

Notices

AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION.
CSU Fullerton, Fullerton, California.
Topic: "Origins and Visions: American

What was I doing there? Like most part-time college instructors, I teach at several colleges. So, on Tuesdays and Thursdays I travel from Berkeley to Alameda to Berkeley to San Francisco then finally home to Berkeley—all on public transportation.

Closer now, I recognized the man's stiff grayish black hair and the shape of his dark sunglasses.

"George," I said, "it's Janet, your English instructor." I touched his arm. He stopped suddenly and lifted his chin to me. With a puzzled look he asked, "What are you doing out this time of night?"

I told him that I taught a night class in San Francisco. "Are you lost?" I chuckled, then rebuffed myself, for what could be funny about a blind man walking into walls at night in a questionable neighborhood?

Despite his disorientation George seemed cheerful as usual. A student had remarked in his journal: "The guy's amazing. No matter what, he's got a smile on his face. If I were blind, I don't know what I'd do."

George once laughed when he'd described how he lost his sight: "I knew there was something wrong with my eyes when one day I was looking at my professor's head, and it looked a lot smaller." Over a forty-year period George had gradually lost his sight in both eyes because of cataracts and glaucoma.

While I and many of my students admired George's intelligence, diligence, and cheerfulness, I would be like to compose thoughts on a Braille Writer and not be able to *see* those thoughts, I didn't initially attribute his difficulties to his blindness. Perhaps this reflected my insensitivity or my ignorance, or more realistically, my lack of time to consider George's disability when I was burdened with correcting seventy-five student essays a week in addition to prepping for classes.

Another time, George caught me in the hall and declared that one of my assignments was too hard. "This is an English 250 class," he stuttered slightly in his excitement, "and you're making us write essays?"

"That's true," I admitted, not justifying my assignments nor giving in to George's exasperation, knowing he would and could complete the assignment once he vocalized his frustration.

The incidents that troubled me the most, though, were not the times when George was angry at me but rather when George seemed melancholy, perhaps in pain. By this, I don't mean that writing caused him pain physically but emotionally. In one of George's essays the narrator goes to a shop to buy his girlfriend a flower. He describes the shapes, colors, and smells of each flower in microscopic detail. The narrator is so moved by each flower's unique beauty that he can't bring himself to choose one for his girlfriend. Throughout the essay he procrastinates; then, in the last paragraph he suddenly walks out of the shop, empty-handed.

wished I had seen it before the class had ended. Like the narrator in the flower essay, George found the selection of words and the organization of those words into sentences so difficult that he was easily defeated and had to "discard" the draft and start again, "painfully." No doubt, most if not all writers struggle through this process. However, for George the pain seemed much keener. The narrator in the flower story suddenly walks out, defeated, not because he hates what he

Thanks," he nodded and stepped onto the escalator. As I watched him descend, I almost called out to him, wondering if he needed help finding his train. But I didn't. Before leaving, I leaned over the railing and watched George make his way past the flower stand to the gate. No doubt, he took this route everyday.

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Notices

Please send announcements and information about workshops, conferences, calls for papers, and other activities of interest to the profession to "Notices" by the deadlines noted in each issue. They will be run on a space-available basis.

CONFERENCES

23-25 April 1992. MELUS (MULTI-ETHNIC LITERARY SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES) ANNUAL CONFERENCE. UCLA, Los Angeles, California.

This conference, which attracts over two hundred scholars and teachers of American ethnic literature from across the country, will feature scholarly papers, workshops, and informal meetings on various writers, such as Amy Tan and Toni Morrison, and wide-ranging topics, such as "American Ethnic Literature and Feminist Theory" and "Expanding the Literature Curriculum," as well as interactive sessions among instructors of literature from high schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions.

For information contact: UCLA Chancellor's Office—Academic Development, 2234 Murphy Hall, UCLA, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1405, (310) 206-7411.

30 April-3 May 1992. CALIFORNIA AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION. CSU Fullerton, Fullerton, California.

Topic: "Origins and Visions: American Voices at the Quincentennial."

For more information contact: John Whalen-Bridge, English Department, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0354.

30 April-3 May 1992. INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE. UC Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

Theme: "Passions, Personas, Powers."

For more information contact: Anthony J. Cascardi, Department of Comparative Literature, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.

28-30 May 1992. AMERICAN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE. Bahia Resort Hotel, San Diego, California.

Conference Fees: $35 preregistration; $10 for retired instructors, independent scholars, and students.

Hotel Fees: $74 (single), $80 (double) per night.

For more information write Professor Alfred Bendixon, English Department, California State University, Los Angeles, CA 90032-8110.

7-10 June 1992. SUMMER INSTI-

(NOTICES, Continued on Page 11)

DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

Using the Dialectical Journal

by SHEILA THORNE
San Jose State University

In teaching composition at the college level, one of my main goals is to encourage and develop students' thinking processes. Good writing, I say to them, entails thinking and discovering and making meaning. I'm always telling them I want to see more analysis in their papers. By this I mean I want them to examine their ideas deeply and extensively; I want them to see relationships; I want them, in general, to move from a simpler conception of the world to a more complex one.

At the heart of examining, of finding relationships, of making meaning, lies questioning or "heuristics." William F. Irmscher defines heuristics as a "structured" and "systematic" investigation into a given topic. "[I]t encourages discovery" and "ensures a more thorough investigation than chance inquiry would" (89).

Many of these procedures are formulaic, such as the familiar journalistic "who? what? where? when? why?" or "cubing," in which an idea or topic is taken through steps of description, comparison, cause and effect analysis, and process analysis. They sound promising, but in my classroom they have failed to produce much enthusiasm or thinking. I have come to believe that students need to *own* the heuristics—and prewriting—process, just as they need to own their topics; they need to question and explore ideas themselves, from the vantage of their own interests and knowledge of the world, without the inhibiting and deadening effects of a procedure imposed upon them from without.

Along the same lines, I have observed that the prefabricated questions that follow stories or essays in readers tend to inhibit rather than develop students' critical abilities. They force thinking into predetermined grooves; they close the text rather than open it. I want students to respond to texts with their *own* questions and explorations.

I have found the dialectical journal an absolutely invaluable tool for developing students' critical thinking. The dialectical journal, developed by Ann Berthoff, should be kept in a notebook or loose-leaf binder. On the right-hand page, students

crucial to both critical reading and writing. A reader is in a dialectical relationship with the text, *in dialogue* with a text, responding to it constantly with arguments, questions, agreement, personal verification. In the same way, a writer is in dialogue with a potential audience, posing questions that audience might ask and addressing them, foreseeing possible responses and eliciting the desired one. A writer may also be in dialogue with the different sides of herself when she writes. As Berthoff sums it up: "*Dialogue* and *dialectic* are cognate: learning to see what you're looking at really means learning to question and questioning is the life of thought" (75).

Dialogue is a heuristic procedure, and in the practice of keeping a dialectical journal, students learn to generate their own questions, their own investigation, rather than respond to teacher or text-based questions or some prefabricated guidelines. By themselves they discover ideas, they create meaning.

Here are some examples from the dialectical reading journal I regularly have my second-semester composition students keep:

LEFT PAGE:

I think it is a fair question to ask what is religious love? within the realm of *Love Medicine*, as described in this novel. The late portion of the book (Lipsha and the geese hearts—definition of Love Medicine as the book calls it) talks about love medicine as being faith. Lipsha says: "I told myself the old superstitions were just that—strange beliefs." He also said, "I thought to myself that faith could be called belief against the odds, whether or not there's any proof . . . I finally convinced myself that the actual power to the love medicine was not the goose heart itself but the faith in the cure."

So, to get back to Sister

RIGHT PAGE:

"Saint Marie" (1934)—Marie Lazarre

This chapter seems to be written differently. Choppier sentences and paragraphs. I'm having a difficult time following the story-line, I'll have to reread.

What is love in this chapter? Sister Leopolda's love sounds like terror. She says to the frightened young girl: "I give you love." This sounds like the cajoling of an abusive parent to a battered child. She sure treats Marie with blind love (if it is even love at all!) She's cruel and punishing to Marie in her so-called love of God. Now, there's yet another type of love: religious love. Now I love God in my life

dress. When she wrote that the dress confused Hannah I figured that it was going to represent something important. Although I must admit that I didn't think that it was going to bring death.

#1 The wind I think represented the unknown of what is to come. When the winds flared up, the town's people expected rain. The rain never came. Instead, when Hannah started the fire she became engulfed in flames; Hannah's fiery death was never expected.

#2 Hannah's inquiry about her mother's love was answered in the end when Eva thrust herself out of her second story window to try and save her daughter.

#4 Sula's strange behavior continued until the end when she just watched her mother burn.

#5 Eva searching for her

third—Hannah mentions her dream to Eva. "Neither one bothered to look it up for they both knew the number was 532. Eva said she'd play it when Mr. Buckland Reed came by."

fourth—Sula's strange behavior

fifth—Eva couldn't find her comb

The explanation Eva gave as to why she killed Plum was well written. Her point was well made when she described her grown son trying to reenter her womb. Plum was infant-like in many ways. He dazed off into space with a stupid grin, messed his pants and was still dependent on his mother for food and shelter. Eva realized that there was no hope for her son and ended his life.

Creative sentences

"The rest stood there as

question and explore ideas themselves, from the vantage of their own interests and knowledge of the world, without the inhibiting and deadening effects of a procedure imposed upon them from without.

Along the same lines, I have observed that the prefabricated questions that follow stories or essays in readers tend to inhibit rather than develop students' critical abilities. They force thinking into predetermined grooves; they close the text rather than open it. I want students to respond to texts with their *own* questions and explorations.

I have found the dialectical journal an absolutely invaluable tool for developing students' critical thinking. The dialectical journal, developed by Ann Berthoff, should be kept in a notebook or loose-leaf binder. On the right-hand page, students

keep a journal of any type—a reading log with notes, quotes, and responses; a daybook; an idea log; whatever. On the left-hand page, students make notes on these entries (notes on notes) and comments (comments on comments) in the form of questions, editorializing, summary sentences, paraphrases. "The facing pages are in dialogue with each other," says Berthoff (45).

And this is the key: dialogue. Dialogue as an analytical process is as ancient as Socrates and as fundamental as the questioning session between teacher and students. In the dialectical journal students learn to carry on a dialogue, a practice

hearts—definition of Love Medicine as the book calls it) talks about love medicine as being faith. Lipsha says: "I told myself the old superstitions were just that—strange beliefs." He also said, "I thought to myself that faith could be called belief against the odds, whether or not there's any proof . . . I finally convinced myself that the actual power to the love medicine was not the goose heart itself but the faith in the cure."

So, to get back to Sister Leopolda, her religious love, her religion as love medicine. Religious love is a love medicine, it heals, comforts and cures woes and pains if you believe that it does. If you have faith in God and in his cure, then there is medicine there. It's the belief and faith that matters.

Sister Leopolda, and all active seekers and followers of God have belief and faith. Lipsha and Grandma Marie also had their faith and belief; thus, their goose hearts worked as love medicine.

ing the story-line, I'll have to reread.

What is love in this chapter? Sister Leopolda's love sounds like terror. She says to the frightened young girl: "I give you love." This sounds like the cajoling of an abusive parent to a battered child. She sure treats Marie with blind love (if it is even love at all!) She's cruel and punishing to Marie in her so-called love of God. Now, there's yet another type of love: religious love. Now I love God in my life too, but sacrificing others for God (cruelty, inflicting pain) is not God's will.

"Wild Geese" (1934)—Nector Kashpaw

A young man awed by the bravery, strength, courage of young Marie. Intrigued. Infatuated.

"The Beads" (1948)—Marie Kashpaw

Okay, so Marie took her sister's daughter, even though times were hard. I suppose she did this out of love for her sister. She loved this girl and would do anything for her; then June chose to live with Eli. I wonder if Marie felt sad?

(from journal of a fourth year student in Environmental Studies)

LEFT PAGE:

Eva does relate one of the strange occurrences with Hannah's death. The dream of the wedding she said was a sign of death. She also points out that the red dress represented the fire.

#3 Toni Morrison was effective in foreshadow with the

RIGHT PAGE:

Sula—1923

strange things

first—wind that didn't bring rain

second—Hannah's coming into her mother's room with an empty bowl and a peck of Kentucky Wonders saying, "Mama, did you ever love us"

expected rain. The rain never came. Instead, when Hannah started the fire she became engulfed in flames; Hannah's fiery death was never expected.

#2 Hannah's inquiry about her mother's love was answered in the end when Eva thrust herself out of her second story window to try and save her daughter.

#4 Sula's strange behavior continued until the end when she just watched her mother burn.

#5 Eva searching for her comb illustrated how people always take for granted that something is always going to be there. Eva learned this lesson the hard way because now her daughter is gone.

the dry winds that ripped through the sky could represent the fire (wind) and the blue dress of Hannah (sky).

The explanation Eva gave as to why she killed Plum was well written. Her point was well made when she described her grown son trying to reenter her womb. Plum was infant-like in many ways. He dazed off into space with a stupid grin, messed his pants and was still dependent on his mother for food and shelter. Eva realized that there was no hope for her son and ended his life.

Creative sentences

"The rest stood there as helpless as sun-flowers leaning on a fence."

"The flames from the yard fire were licking the blue cotton dress, making her dance."

Question

Does the rose shape birth mark have any meaning?

(from journal of a second year Engineering student)

At first, students may think the whole idea is rather crazy, so they need lots of modeling and encouragement. At the outset I usually provide some examples from the last semester's journals; after journals are turned in for the first time, I reproduce a few of the most interesting responses anonymously. Soon students begin to get a feel for what a dialectical journal should look like. However, I try not to provide *too much* modeling, for this might inhibit the students' individual, personal styles of dialogue.

(DIALECTICAL JOURNAL, Continued on Page 15)

i.e. NEEDS BACK ISSUES

To complete its files, *inside english* needs several copies of the October 1989 (XVII.1) issue. If you have an extra copy of this issue, please send it to Barbara Bilson Woodruff, *inside english*, Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90405.

WRITING COLLABORATIVELY ABOUT COLLABORATIVE WRITING

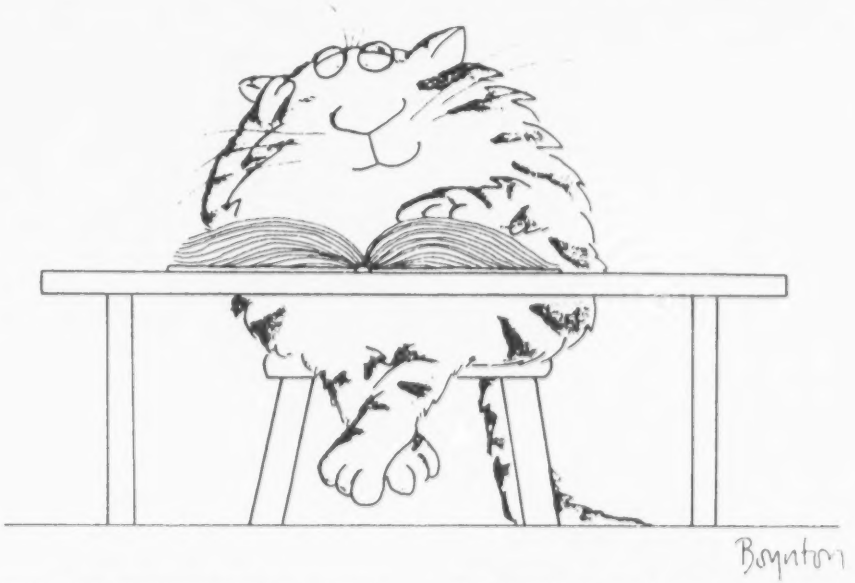
by BARBARA GILES
and PATRICIA WANGLER
Chaffey Community College

As teachers who value collaboration with each other and in our writing classes, we were eager to review *Writing as Social Action* by Marilyn M. Cooper and Michael Holzman and *Vital Signs 2: Teaching and Learning Language Collaboratively* edited by James L. Collins. We hoped that close readings of both books would provide us with new strategies and techniques. One book lived up to these expectations; the other never came close.

Writing as Social Action was very disappointing. It never fulfilled the promises made in the introduction: "Writing is a way of interacting with others—a social activity" (Cooper x). Instead, this text seemed to provide a forum for the authors, Cooper and Holzman, to publish a group of essays in a book (eight of fifteen articles were published previously in a variety of journals). The book lacks cohesiveness and does not center on the subject of writing, even though writing is a key word in the title. Social action, also found in the title, can be viewed as more than writing, and indeed it is. While the introduction leads us to believe that collaboration is an important part of social action, we find the use of collaboration in the text limited at best. Cooper and Holzman confirm this collaborative interest when they promise that the text will demonstrate that "writing is not merely a common system through which individual minds can communicate—an abstract telephone network in the brains of a group of individuals—but rather a real interaction among social groups and individuals" (x). Unfortunately this promise is not delivered in

ers are isolated from each other" (v), Collins identifies the problems of writing in isolation which are found in most classes; the book constitutes a series of solutions to these problems. Each solution is well grounded in clear composition theory. While this text is not written exclusively for an audience of college teachers (some of the articles focus on elementary and high school teaching), all of the essays have applicability at the college level. Theory, when needed, is clearly presented and mixed with practical application. The text is cohesive and clearly written.

In "Part One: Motives," essays by Tom Romano, Gordon M. Pradl, and Lois T. Stover demonstrate a rationale supporting collaboration. Each of these authors underscores that



students typically do not listen to one another, do not speak to one another, and do not have the opportunity to share ideas, read one another's work, and serve as audiences; thus, they are not active learners. Romano, in "Writing Through Others: The Necessity of Collaboration," stresses that even though students may share inaccurate responses to one

run into disagreement" (65). He intersperses his essay with samples of student writing that support both practice and theory.

Ruth Vinz and Dan Kirby, Andrew Stibbs, Sharon Flitterman-King, and Susan Ohanian, in "Part Three: Collaborating with Texts," center on the reader as collaborator. The first three articles in this section emphasize collaborative reading, not collaborative writing, and offer valid suggestions for classroom use. In the final article, "Collaboration, Silence, and Solitude," Ohanian reminds us that collaboration is not the only way to teach. We need room for both group interaction and individual thought. She states: "When we all think alike, we don't think enough: our ideas become fat and lazy and self-satisfied. When

that happens we are in danger of teaching the method instead of the child" (144).

Amazingly, with this variety of authors, the editor was able to pull together a unified book—no overlap among the articles, yet all are connected. Our parting evaluation: "thumbs up" for *Vital Signs 2*; "thumbs down" for *Writing as Social Action*.

ments dependent upon close reading of texts selected as representatives of several academic disciplines.

The third edition of *The Four Worlds of Writing* is still a book focused on student writing produced in collaborative workshops in the classroom, but the book now facilitates an instructor's prerogative to mix and match writing strategies and contexts in assignments. It should appeal to instructors who have had experience teaching a variety of writing strategies and who want their students to learn several ways to approach writing problems. This new format makes the book accessible to community college instructors who like to individualize their instruction or who want to choose some of the assignments rather than follow the entire sequence of contexts laid out by the authors.

Contexts for writing develop from the four worlds of writing identified by the authors: the private world of places and persons, the public world of shared issues and the media, the academic world, and the working world. In addition, the book teaches persuasive strategies and organizational plans for use in the public, academic, and working worlds. Practice writing in the academic world includes examples of researched papers from subjects in humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and business. The research papers in subjects other than the humanities are presented in American Psychological Association style, and the writing in literature follows Modern Language Association conventions. Although stages for developing the research paper are as thorough as the book's other writing assignments, the instructor may feel a need for supplemental text to expand the students' awareness of library references in varied fields, note-taking practices, and style questions. Writing in the academic world also includes interpreting poems, short stories, and nonfiction essays. The authors also include a new student essay exam on the subject of Doublespeak and a few poems, short stories, and

the subject of writing, even though writing is a key word in the title. Social action, also found in the title, can be viewed as more than writing, and indeed it is. While the introduction leads us to believe that collaboration is an important part of social action, we find the use of collaboration in the text limited at best. Cooper and Holzman confirm this collaborative interest when they promise that the text will demonstrate that "writing is not merely a common system through which individual minds can communicate—an abstract telephone network in the brains of a group of individuals—but rather a real interaction among social groups and individuals" (x). Unfortunately this promise is not delivered in the text.

Most of Holzman's essays deal with literacy in general, not just writing. Cooper provides one fine, useful chapter for college composition teachers: "Unhappy Consciousness in First-Year English: How to Figure Things Out for Yourself." Cooper ably and clearly integrated theory and practical application in this essay. We only wished that the whole book had been written in this style. Instead, the rest of the text consists mostly of theory and is, therefore, rather turgid and unappealing; it lacks a clear focus or organizational pattern. The book jumps from composition theory, to adult literacy, to college composition, back to adult literacy, and back to theory again. We were unable to discover the reason for ordering the essays in this manner.

Vital Signs 2: Teaching and Learning Language Collaboratively, on the other hand, is a wonderful compilation of essays by a variety of authors and organized in an easy-to-read fashion. Divided into three sections—"Motives," "Methods," and "Collaborating with Texts"—*Vital Signs 2* delivers what the introduction promises: "Collaboration takes more than putting the chairs in a circle" (Collins v). Each article in this book addresses in theory and/or in practice the dynamics of writing collaboratively. Possible pitfalls as well as strategies for success are elaborated. While labeling school as "the only place where writ-

students typically do not listen to one another, do not speak to one another, and do not have the opportunity to share ideas, read one another's work, and serve as audiences; thus, they are not active learners. Romano, in "Writing Through Others: The Necessity of Collaboration," stresses that even though students may share inaccurate responses to one another's writing, they are engaged "in a collaborative dialectic" (9). More can be learned from one another than just "correct usage." According to Pradl, in "Revising Teacher-Student Role Relationships: Collaboration and Mature Dependency," the teacher's role is changed in this process; he suggests honoring "the authority of the learner" (25) in our classroom. Stover, in "Learning Teaching From Students," supports the important role that students should occupy in the classroom. She points out that teachers have a powerful effect on students, but what is often overlooked is that students teach teachers—the collaborative principle in action (35).

Practical approaches to collaborative writing are discussed by Sharon Kingen, Stephen M. Koziol, Jr. and Penny Pence, Judy Lightfoot, Lad Tobin, Shelly Borror Jackson, and Susan W. Walker in "Part Two: Methods." Kingen reminds us that new approaches may require more than one attempt and subsequent adaptation. Her essay, "I Tried That Once, But . . . ," presents a step-by-step strategy for working into the collaborative process. Tobin, in "Writing Between the Lines," also provides some concrete examples for implementation of collaborative strategies that support his belief that collaboration "forces students to develop a clear plan for completing the project, to take their classmates' ideas and writing seriously, and to negotiate when they that happens we are in danger of teaching the method instead of the child" (144).

Amazingly, with this variety of authors, the editor was able to pull together a unified book—no overlap among the articles, yet all are connected. Our parting evaluation: "thumbs up" for *Vital Signs 2*; "thumbs down" for *Writing as Social Action.*

☐ Collins, James L., ed. *Vital Signs 2: Teaching and Learning Language Collaboratively*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1991. 149 pages. $16.00.

☐ Cooper, Marilyn M., and Michael Holzman. *Writing as Social Action*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1989. 243 pages.

Barbara Giles and Patricia Wangler's collaboration began in graduate school at Cal Poly, Pomona, where they wrote papers together for a seminar in eighteenth century literature. Their first attempt was published in the Cal Poly nonfiction journal, Portfolio. *Their success at co-authored writing led them to participate as presenters at a workshop on collaborative writing chaired by Dr. Ted Humphrey (Cal Poly) at the Young Rhetoricians Conference in Monterey, June 1991.*

A LOOK AT TWO WRITING TEXTS

by VALLE L. BROKES
Ohlone College

If composition texts were arranged along a continuum of approaches to writing, these two books would be close to either end of it. *The Four Worlds of Writing*, third edition, by eminent authors Janice M. Lauer, Gene Montague, Andrea Lunsford, and Janet Emig, is itself a paradigm of the writing process defined from careful research by writing teachers. The other book, *From Texts to Text: Mastering Academic Discourse*, by George H. Jensen, sets up writing assign-

jects other than the humanities are presented in American Psychological Association style, and the writing in literature follows Modern Language Association conventions. Although stages for developing the research paper are as thorough as the book's other writing assignments, the instructor may feel a need for supplemental text to expand the students' awareness of library references in varied fields, note-taking practices, and style questions. Writing in the academic world also includes interpreting poems, short stories, and nonfiction essays. The authors also include a new student essay exam on the subject of Doublespeak and a few poems, short stories, and nonfiction selections as sources of sample student essays.

In the first chapter the authors collect some basic writing strategies to be used as paradigms by the student. They urge the instructor not to teach these strategies by themselves but to use them in connection with the contexts for writing delineated in subsequent chapters in Part One. The first chapter develops ways to start an essay in the "Starting Guide" and defines formal and informal exploratory guides. Among the formal guides are the authors' approach they call "Shifting Perspectives" of the student's proposed writing question—assessing static, dynamic, and relative views; the journalistic five Ws and a How formula; Kenneth Burke's Pentad (action, agent, means, purpose, scene); classical topics (definition, cause, comparison, testimony, analogy), and a simplified form of Steven Toulmin's system of analysis. Among the less formal guides, the book describes techniques of brainstorming and looping. One of these, too, is an "Interviewing Guide," often needed by students writing research papers.

Following the exploratory guide are plans for analyzing and choosing an audience, for defining the writer/reader relationship, and for choosing the writer's voice. A focusing guide helps writers narrow their subjects and practice changing their focuses. Alternative

(REVIEWS, Continued on Page 9)

REVIEWS

(Continued from Page 8)

plans for a paper's organization follow, including descriptive, narrative, classification, and evaluative plans. The first chapter concludes with definitions of unity, coherence, and paragraphs; gives a Reader Response Guide for the writer to use; and suggests solutions for revision problems.

New writing samples and commentary by the authors of the book make clear that the student texts should be considered not as models but as works in progress for discussion. Instructors who delight in working with student groups will be drawn to the book's methods of presenting examples, encouraging group discussion, and initiating practice for the students' own writing skills through class workshops at each stage of the writing process.

Part Two is a guide to word processing (new to the third edition), editing, and sentence combining. The chapter on editing skills includes grammar, mechanical conventions, punctuation, and spelling rules and some exercises. The last chapter illustrates sentence and paragraph-combining skills. Two glossaries, one on rhetorical and one on grammatical terms, and a rather sketchy index conclude the book. *The Four Worlds of Writing* is a resource so full of ideas and structure that it can continue to inform instructors and readers through recursive posing and solving of rhetoric and discourse questions.

In a different mode, *From Texts to Text* aims to give the student models in what Jensen has selected as texts from the disciplines of anthropology, science, psychology, rhetoric and philosophy, criticism, and history. Of the forty selections, eight are by women: Margaret Mead, "The Growth and Initiation of an Arapesh Boy"; Marjorie Shostak, "Women and Men"; Evelyn Fox Keller, "A World of Difference"; Virginia Satir, "Patterns of Communication"; Alice Walker, "The Abortion"; Ingrid de Kok, "Small Pass-

implies logical and historical cause and effect in these fields when actually the connections among the essays are sometimes flawed. Another question raised partly by the book's subtitle and partly by the way essays are organized is how academic discourse is defined. Do Jensen's writing assignments in each of the fields actually teach that discipline's academic discourse? The third question the book raises is that other writing assignments seem open to criticism on the question of sensitivity to human feelings.

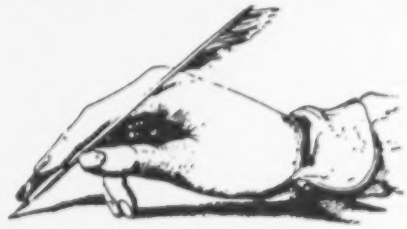
The book's claim to present a discipline through a selection of essays cannot help but be distorted because the essays present only a very small portion rather than an overview of the subject. In addition, it seems too much to ask of college freshmen that they fill in the gaps of knowledge. The section on "Psychology" is a case in point. All of the articles deal with psychoanalysis, beginning with Freud, skipping over Jung, and ending with Virginia Satir. There is no hint in the section that the discipline of psychology involves anything more than these few views of psychoanalysis.

Also, the question arises whether or not the writing assignments teach the skills of academic discourse. One of the assignments in the anthropology section sounds like a satire on academic discourse:

> As a final writing assignment in this chapter, you will be asked to become an ethnographer and study a culture that is foreign to you. Instead of traveling to a primitive village, you will be asked to learn about a culture that is unlike your culture. You could visit a new church, eat at an ethnic restaurant, or attend some kind of community meeting. Before observing the culture, you may need to ask permission of appropriate officials; anthropologists call this negotiating entree. While there, you should observe and take field notes, interview the people about their culture, and collect artifacts.

"Write an essay in which you analyze how an advertisement directed toward children works and then discuss whether you feel that the advertisement is ethical. In other words, do you feel that the advertisement in any way takes advantage of children" (240)?

"The illustrations that follow are posters used in various war propaganda campaigns. Write an essay in



which you analyze the mythic qualities in these pieces of propaganda; then discuss whether you feel that they are ethical" (274).

In the section on science, two of the assignments seem open to the criticism of insensitivity to human feelings. The interpretation section following an essay by Karl Popper on "The Origin of Science" says: "A Hindu creation myth is presented in the first writing assignment below. Read the myth, using your reason and logic to question the explanation presented in it" (91). The actual writing assignment that precedes the myth reads: "Popper says that science originated as people began to doubt the content of myths—when they no longer accepted them simply because they were being told as they had always been told. The text that follows is a Hindu creation myth composed about A.D. 1000. Read the myth as a scientist would by doubting this description of the origin of the universe. Then write an essay in which you explain why this myth should not be believed" (92). Another essay in the section on science which seems of doubtful

for at least two decades. Yet the hold of traditional rhetoric is quite strong, especially outside the classroom in the so-called writing centers. However, in classroom practice, most of us engage students in discussion and small group activities, which form, ideally speaking, the core of a collaborative process of discovering meaning for oneself in the context of a community or audience. Thus the writing teacher embodies two conflicting personalities with conflicting voices —the giver of rules and structure versus the facilitator of discovery and creativity.

William Covino's *Forms of Wondering: A Dialogue on Writing, for Writers* offers a number of provocative but ultimately unhelpful suggestions for teachers faced with the above conflict. First, Covino offers labels and elaborate definitions for two kinds of writing—"formalist-objective" and "dialectical"—that roughly correspond to the two voices mentioned above. Traditional or formalist-objective writing "reduces and simplifies complexity" by fixing the forms of thinking or questioning. The emphasis on fixed forms prevents associative thinking or an exploration of multiple perspectives; the resulting text lacks surprise, delight, and persuasiveness. Dialectical writing, on the other hand, "magnifies and emphasizes complexity" (ix-x). It embodies multiple perspectives on a given topic and, at times, even transcends a narrowly defined topic through associative leaps, thereby enlarging the context and enlightening the reader. Covino offers several examples of this kind of writing, including Montaigne's essay "On Coaches" and Plato's *Phaedrus*.

"Dialectic," for Covino, refers to a sustained inquiry into a subject through dialogue that elicits different and often contradictory definitions of the subject and continually challenges what we assume to be true. Covino sees such dialoguing as the foundation of writing instruction. He constructs the book itself as a "continuous dialogue with reading and writing assignments interspersed" (ix). To

is a resource so full of ideas and structure that it can continue to inform instructors and readers through recursive posing and solving of rhetoric and discourse questions.

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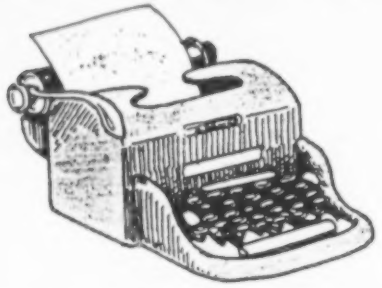

with a classical bent as well as those who like to provoke discussions of a controversial nature to stimulate student writing.

The format of the assignments in each selection begins with a discussion of the discipline identified and a preview of the subject or author of the text. A suggested written response meant to serve as a quick, first response to the reading follows the selection. Sections on rhetorical analysis and interpretation follow, intended to provoke group discussion and analysis of writing techniques as well as of ideas in the text. More formal writing assignments succeed each reading and discussion.

Although this format seems reasonable, it raises three major questions that need to be explored. The imposed order of the selections

As a final writing assignment in this chapter, you will be asked to become an ethnographer and study a culture that is foreign to you. Instead of traveling to a primitive village, you will be asked to learn about a culture that is unlike your culture. You could visit a new church, eat at an ethnic restaurant, or attend some kind of community meeting. Before observing the culture, you may need to ask permission of appropriate officials; anthropologists call this negotiating entree. While there, you should observe and take field notes, interview the people about their culture, and collect artifacts.

Once you have completed your study of this foreign culture, write a narrative about your experience that will inform an educated audience of what you have learned. Before turning in your narrative, you should change the names of any people whom you observed to protect their identity. (86)

The section "Rhetoric and Philosophy: The Ethics of Persuasion" also includes assignments that seem of doubtful value for teaching the discourse of a discipline. An excerpt from the "Gorgias," by Plato, is followed by excerpts from Aristotle's "Rhetoric," Isocrates' "Nicocles or the Cyprians," and Saint Augustine's "On Christian Doctrine." Subsequent articles are "The Psycho-Seduction of Children," by Vance Packard; "The Social and Economic Context of Advertising," by John Hobson; and "War Propaganda," by Adolf Hitler. Although Jensen does little to define "ethics," several of the writing assignments that follow the articles request students to bring a sophisticated concept of ethics to bear on these subjects. In addition, the writing assignments do not clarify which discourse is being served, rhetoric or philosophy.

"Write an essay in which you argue that it is either ethical or unethical to teach rhetoric" (229).

writing assignment below. Read the myth, using your reason and logic to question the explanation presented in it" (91). The actual writing assignment that precedes the myth reads: "Popper says that science originated as people began to doubt the content of myths—when they no longer accepted them simply because they were being told as they had always been told. The text that follows is a Hindu creation myth composed about A.D. 1000. Read the myth as a scientist would by doubting this description of the origin of the universe. Then write an essay in which you explain why this myth should not be believed" (92). Another essay in the section on science which seems of doubtful educational value at the very least is an article by Stephen Jay Gould in which he criticizes early Nineteenth Century theorists on racial polygeny. The essay features pictures, among few illustrations in the book, of caricatured skulls of black men next to drawings of skulls of primates, no doubt meant to illustrate racist views of the early researchers.

Five appendixes to the book deal with writing and revising skills, including what the author says are case studies and student essays that explore opposite approaches to writing.

□ Lauer, Janice M., Gene Montague, Andrea Lunsford, and Janet Emig. *Four Worlds of Writing*, 3rd ed. New York: Harper Collins, 1991. 576 pages.

□ Jensen, George H. *From Texts to Text: Mastering Academic Discourse*. New York: Harper Collins, 1991. 500 pages.

Valle Brokes worked for many years as Research and Photo Editor of Janus Book Publishers. She returned to teaching two years ago when the company was bought by Simon and Schuster.

THE CONTINUOUS DIALOGUE ON WRITING

by **DIBAKAR BARUA**
Golden West College

Conversations about a "paradigm-shift" in writing instruction have been ongoing now

a given topic and, at times, even transcends a narrowly defined topic through associative leaps, thereby enlarging the context and enlightening the reader. Covino offers several examples of this kind of writing, including Montaigne's essay "On Coaches" and Plato's *Phaedrus*.

"Dialectic," for Covino, refers to a sustained inquiry into a subject through dialogue that elicits different and often contradictory definitions of the subject and continually challenges what we assume to be true. Covino sees such dialoguing as the foundation of writing instruction. He constructs the book itself as a "continuous dialogue with readings and writing assignments interspersed" (ix). To construct the dialogue, Covino uses seven characters—the Sophist, the Epistemologist, the Expediter, the Radical, the Administrator, the Writing Teacher, and the TV Watcher. The characters or voices all belong to Covino, an indication that the writer's self is not unitary and that diversity of opinions in the community has a reflection in the diversity within the writer's self.

Since Covino offers "no devices that allow for only partial involvement in the dialogue: no table of contents, no index, no divisions into chapters" (ix), synopsizing *Forms of Wondering* may be unfair to Covino's intention. But the book is so unique in its design that I feel I must do so even at the risk of simplifying Covino's ideas.

The book begins by asking "What's the Use of Writing," but soon the characters turn their attention to the nature of a dialogue. They study two transcripts—of a Phil Donahue show on women and make-up and of a university forum on pornography. They discover that a dialogue embodies "a structure of differences" with several alternating units: initial assertion, agreement and support, disagreement and refutation, shifting the issue, redefining the subject. They debate the virtues of such discourse. The Expediter objects that writing based on dialoguing will cultivate

(REVIEWS, Continued on Page 15)

TEACHING WRITING ONE-TO-ONE

A Day of Conference Teaching

by VIRGINIA KOLBERG DUYM
Monterey Peninsula College

On a Monday morning the second week of the semester, I am reflecting on my Freshman Composition class. Based on the first day's introductory writing and first week's writing log, I have formed a few first impressions:

Paula, a returning student, wrote a lovely description in class but afterwards asked if she was really ready for academic writing.

Kristin, a recent high school graduate, has written essays and research papers in honors English and now wonders what she is supposed to learn in another writing course.

Steve, Maria, Jessie, and others have taken the pre-101 class on essay writing and grammar but write sketchy, incomplete pieces in the log. Of these students, two are ESL and have been in this country since elementary school.

Nancy, another returning student, has kept a personal journal and reports doing well on papers for other classes but says she doesn't know how to tell whether or not she's writing well or how to improve.

Bill plans to become a doctor and wants this class to prepare him for writing through a pre-med program and beyond.

There are other students whose names I vaguely remember and whose faces are young and composed. Yet the predominant impression is of different backgrounds, ages, abilities, goals, and expectations. Each one is different, yet I feel tempted by the large group to see them in one big, indistinguishable lump. To-

several books on teaching writing, among them Donald Murray's *A Writer Teaches Writing*. He hooked me with the first sentence: "Teaching writing is fun" (1). His responsive teaching method allows students freedom to choose their own topics, to hear their own voices, to use their own writing as "the principal text of the course" (83). Central to his method is the individual response to student texts in weekly conferences. He claims that "Conference teaching is the most effective—and most practical—method of teaching composition" (147).

I had my doubts. Having been too shy as a student to approach my professors, I was accustomed to a distant relationship between teacher and student. Besides, I believed college students were ready to write, that they had a background from high school or basic writing courses that prepared them to work at the same level. What, I wondered, could be accomplished in fifteen minutes one-on-one that couldn't be done at least as well in a fifty-minute class period? Nevertheless, I would experiment.

That first semester I started small with a single conference scheduled after the assignment of the research paper. Having given students the option of choosing their own topics, I expected them to need more specific help in research and organization than could be done in class. In conference, questions came up not only on the research paper but on other assignments as well. Individual time also closed some of the distance between me and the students, whom I had begun to know through their journals, but who may not have before take advantage of access to individual help.

On this Monday morning I am responding to the students who come in, one at a time:

Paula has a strong individual voice, which I first noticed in her description and which is consistent in her paper. She has described a place in the country, sometimes vividly. When I ask her what she likes about the piece, she responds that writing it has revived her memories. She tells me more about the place and time she has described, and I comment on the sharp images. I ask about where the piece is going, because her purpose, aside from fulfilling an assignment, is still unclear. A week later she comes in with two more revisions into which she has poured her energy. But now this piece is hers; she has discovered what this place and time has meant in her life. The text glows—and so does the author.

Jessie comes in with a standard five-paragraph essay about a high school teacher, long on generalities and short on detail, with only a glimmer of her own voice. She says that's what she has been taught to do. I ask about the teacher who is the subject of her paper, and as she tells more detail and becomes more animated, I jot notes in the margins. I suggest free-writing as a technique to get a more immediate and detailed impression of the subject. "Put yourself back in that classroom," I say. "See the posters on the walls, the teacher, his expressions, the reactions of those around you. Hear what he says and write that." She says she'll try

Kristin's essay is considerably more polished and detailed, but the unusual organization she has attempted gives us something to talk about. Her transitions need to be clearer because the flashbacks create a challenge for the reader to follow. Because the paper these details really contribute to her purpose; the end seems vague. We talk about the subject and why she wrote this, where she might cut without losing essentials, and how to focus the conclusion. I ask her to put herself in the reader's chair to see where there might be questions, impatience, closure.

Bill has written half a dozen pages, most of which are more general than specific and include wordy sentences and repetition. The voice is noticeably distant and analytical, yet the topic is a person who inspired him with her humanitarian life. The voice and subject feel incongruous and unconvincing to me. I ask him more about this person: How did he know her? What did she say and do? I suggest putting the draft aside to free-write

(ONE-TO-ONE, Continued on Page 15)

SATURDAY

(for BP)

I skip rocks.

You play with the light
circling
blades of grass
coming
up through the water.
A blue damsel lands
on the stick
in your left hand.

I look at your face
and get lost
throat closes
words stop.

I'm
just
dazzled.

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well or how to improve.

Bill plans to become a doctor and wants this class to prepare him for writing through a pre-med program and beyond.

There are other students whose names I vaguely remember and whose faces are young and composed. Yet the predominant impression is of different backgrounds, ages, abilities, goals, and expectations. Each one is different, yet I feel tempted by the large group to see them in one big, indistinguishable lump. Today, though, instead of meeting them as a class, I will see them one at a time in fifteen-minute conferences to work with the completed draft of their first essay. The assignment asked them to write about a person, place, or event that has been important in their lives. By the end of two days of conferences, I will better know each of these students as writers.

I first started using conferences several years ago when, like some of my students, I returned to the classroom after being home with children for several years. Knowing that I was out of touch and needed new ideas, I read

single conference scheduled after the assignment of the research paper. Having given students the option of choosing their own topics, I expected them to need more specific help in research and organization than could be done in class. In conference, questions came up not only on the research paper but on other assignments as well. Individual time also closed some of the distance between me and the students, whom I had begun to know through their journals, but who may not have felt equally comfortable with me. Several students, less shy than most, had come to me regularly for help throughout the semester. These voluntary conferees turned out to be the most convincing reason for using conferences, for they all made better and more focused progress than their classmates who had had less individual attention.

Since that first experiment with conferences, I have increased to four the number scheduled during the semester, and I encourage students to schedule their own conferences during office hours. Because conferences are a regular part of the class, more students than the teacher who is the subject of her paper, and as she tells more detail and becomes more animated, I jot notes in the margins. I suggest free-writing as a technique to get a more immediate and detailed impression of the subject. "Put yourself back in that classroom," I say. "See the posters on the walls, the teacher, his expressions, the reactions of those around you. Hear what he says and write that." She says she'll try.

Kristin's essay is considerably more polished and detailed, but the unusual organization she has attempted gives us something to talk about. Her transitions need to be clearer because the flashbacks create a challenge for the reader to follow. Because the paper deals with several incidents and how they influenced her, I suggest that she also clarify the paper's emphasis, putting more detail where the reader wants to know more. We both recognize the process as fine tuning, and yet something is missing here too, maybe the energy that comes from fresh discovery?

Maria has written about how she had to learn English when she came here from the Philippines as an eight-year-old. She includes details of her first impressions of the school bus, her class, teacher and students, and her feelings of fear and anxiety. All of this is in fairly short sentences, but since the voice is authentic, I leave them alone. Then she skips over the process of learning the language, saying that in spite of knowing no English at that time, she speaks fluently now. I point out to her the wealth of detail about the difficulties of immigration and the lack of detail on what she has indicated is her subject. "What do you really want to write about?" I ask. Since she responds that her focus really is on the language, I suggest that she add detail on that and try to work the two parts together and that she schedule another conference when she has revised it.

Nancy's paper reads like a detailed diary of an event with comments along the way on what each incident signifies to her. She seems unusually self-aware and reflective, but as I approach the end, I wonder which of

circling
blades of grass
coming
up through the water.
A blue damsel lands
on the stick
in your left hand.

I look at your face
and get lost
throat closes
words stop.

I'm
just
dazzled.

You laugh
covering your face
with your hands
so I can speak.

SUNDAY
(for BP)

I like riding in your truck
the way it moves
when you shift
and seatbelt free,
I like sitting next to you,
really close,
looking at your face
how your lashes touch.

From the dash
Sunday passion
hangs
on
chains.

In the back
the rope and pitchfork
tangle.

PAMELA SPOTO
Shasta College

Ms. Spoto's poetry "focuses on men and women, in relationship, really speaking different languages, like cross-cultural communication." Three of her poems appeared in the Fall 1991 Journal of Poetry Therapy.

THE POWERLESS "I"

(Continued from Page 3)

three-part effort: "My decision to come to college is a part of career goals, lack of motivation, and hating work." Talk about a dramatic difference. Almost as different, you might say, as a pearl and a sausage—even if the "pearl" does end its sentence with a preposition. More importantly, Tom saw the difference. By exercising a little intellectual muscle, he had written an arguable thesis. In fact, it was the first time, as he put it, that he didn't write the "first, most obvious thing that popped into my head."

Encouraging that intellectual response, in fact, provides the foundation for what I call my no-nonsense grading system. Students are graded in four areas: thesis (for a possible forty points); logical connections (for a possible thirty points); details (for a possible twenty points); and grammar/mechanics (for a possible ten points).[1] The system is three-fold.

1) Students write the essay assignment in class. I take the essays home and read them, looking at how the class performed in the four areas.

2) At the start of the next class meeting, I give what I call a class-profile report, showing them, in the four areas, what problems and successes they as a class demonstrated in their writing. At this point, the students form small groups and read their essays to each another, looking for those features that dents, I do think that this kind of system encourages healthy dialogue, which makes for good argumentation.

Perhaps the most challenging experience for my students is explicating my thesis. Recently, in fact, I gave my freshman composition class at Fullerton College the following thesis: "The American credo, 'That's entertainment,' rests on the illusory belief that we are entertained in a separate compartment of our minds." The class was thrilled: as Richard put it, it was the first time anyone would receive a score of forty for the thesis. As they thought about what was involved, however, they began to realize how much I expected from them; *they* had to write an introduction that would lead—logically, of course—to the thesis (as the last sentence of the first paragraph), and *they* would have to figure out how to argue the thesis, developing and confirming it regardless of their own belief. Halfway through the semester, though, already they had enough intellectual vigor to approach the task with confidence.

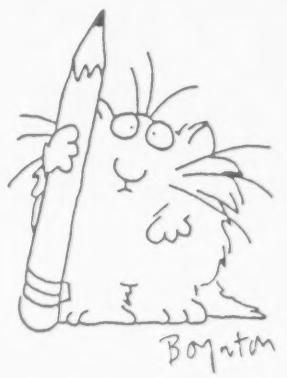
Somehow I'm not surprised. Once the mind is engaged, it's only natural for it to generate and apply its creative juices towards producing a response.

Some students fight me. They are remarkably skilled in not thinking about logical responsibility, remarkably insistent in clinging to the three-part thesis—thinking that if they keep writing it, I will gradually weaken and accept it. When they realize that I am serious, they are afraid. Some drop the class. Those who stay thank me. They realize that I am respecting them, thinking of them as capable of intellectual thought, and they appreciate it even more, then, when their thought sparks an intellectual response from me. Thus in the true sense of dialogue, we "irritate" each other—in every positive sense of the word all semester.

END NOTES

[1] Using the system gives me a kind of shorthand for grading. I simply write T, LC, D, and G/M at the top of the essay, followed by points earned and brief comments. Then, in the essay's margins, I can write more analysis as I respond to the four areas.

[2] Quite recently I inserted one of my thesis statements for an assignment that asked the students to write an argument about what causes a particular man to be a man. Without their knowing it, I wrote the assignment and used my thesis in the workshop: "Truly a man in whom opposites eddy and redirect, my priest exudes an openness of faith that makes him the father/child man from whom I have learned about trust." I dictated the statement to the class along with the other theses and was amused to find out subsequently that most students had transcribed "eddy" as "Eddie," thinking it was the priest's name. Even when I explained what "eddy" meant, they still thought that the writer was suspiciously obscure. We had, needless to say, a most engaging debate over this one.



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Over the last eight years, Dr. Cappelutti has taught a wide variety of literature, creative writing, and composition courses at both CSU Fullerton and Fullerton College. She earned a Ph.D. in literature from UC Riverside (June 1990). Her dissertation focuses on the depersonalized poetics of T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden in conceptual relationship to those of John Keats.

NOTICES

(Continued from Page 6)

TUTE FOR TEACHERS OF LITERATURE (SPONSORED BY THE COLLEGE SECTION OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH). Ocean Creek Resort and Conference Center, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

Topic: "Critical Theory: Curriculum, Pedagogy, Politics."

Seminar Leaders: Peter Elbow (Professor "Sarton's Vision, Communicated in Three Genre"; Sandra M. Gilbert, Professor of English at UC Davis, on "Sarton and the Feminist Tradition"; Carolyn Heilbrun, Professor of English at Columbia University, on "The May Sarton I Have Known"; and Constance Hunting, Professor of English at the University of Maine, on "May Sarton, Editor."

Registration: $200, payable to Westbrook College/Sarton Conference and due in full by 1 June 1992, includes tuition, Thursday dinner, and Friday lunch. Housing: $32 (sin-

provides an outlet for works that are too long for consideration as articles, but too short for publication as monographs or books. The series intends to present leading-edge thinking and will emphasize theoretical, exploratory essays in English literacy education at all teaching levels. Essays addressing such issues as reconceptualizing literacy, restructuring curriculum, and assessment theory are especially welcome. Please submit papers of thirty-five to fifty pages in length, double-spaced to Publications, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road

in their writing. At this point, the students form small groups and read their essays to

each another, looking for those features that I have discussed. They are beginning to see—literally—what I mean by concepts like thesis arguability. In fact, one variation of this workshop has engendered dramatic insight; I give the students five thesis statements to consider, theses that I have selected from their writing assignment and that demonstrate typical patterns of logic. The students must then rate the theses (I have learned a lot about their levels of understanding at this point from listening to their small group discussions). We then plot their ratings on the board, and I tell them, finally, how I rated the statements and why. During these lively class discussions the students interact with each other and then with me. The air is charged with intensity—especially when I tell them that one of the thesis statements was mine.[2]

3) The students take their essays home and revise them, applying what they have heard and thought about in class. At the next class meeting, they turn in the original, a self-analysis (using the four-area foci), and a revised essay. When they receive their marked essay back at the following class meeting, they really begin to hear what I am saying about their arguments, for they have played a vital role in that grading process. Thus, rather than grading being something done to them, it is now something that they participate in doing for themselves; and although I am not claiming that I am developing ESP with my stu-

sponsibility, remarkably insistent in clinging to the three-part thesis —thinking that if they quently that most students had transcribed "eddy" as "Eddie," thinking it was the priest's

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Seminar Leaders: Peter Elbow (Professor of English, University of Massachusetts at Amherst), June Jordon (Professor of Afro-American Studies and Women's Studies, UC Berkeley), and Mary Louse Pratt (Professor of Spanish and Portuguese and of Comparative Literature, Stanford University).

Discussion Leaders: Barbara Christian (Professor of Afro-American Studies, UC Berkeley), Gerald Graff (Professor of English and Education, University of Chicago), and Cynthia L. Selfe (Professor of Composition and Communication, Michigan Technological University).

Institute Fee: $315, includes tuition, materials, coffee service, three lunches, and welcoming buffet dinner. Full fee is due 15 April 1992. Housing and air fares are extra. Housing ranges from $60 (double-bedded room) to $145 (three bedroom apartment). Discounted air fares can be arranged through Travel Services Group (800) 336-0227.

For more information write 1992 NCTE Summer Institute, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

11-13 June 1992. MAY SARTON AT 80: A CELEBRATION OF HER LIFE AND WORK. Westbrook College, Portland, Maine.

Speakers: May Sarton, who will read from her poetry; Bradford Dudley Danziel, Professor of Literature at Westbrook College, on "Sarton's Vision, Communicated in Three Genre"; Sandra M. Gilbert, Professor of English at UC Davis, on "Sarton and the Feminist Tradition"; Carolyn Heilbrun, Professor of English at Columbia University, on "The May Sarton I Have Known"; and Constance Hunting, Professor of English at the University of Maine, on "May Sarton, Editor."

Registration: $200, payable to Westbrook College/Sarton Conference and due in full by 1 June 1992, includes tuition, Thursday dinner, and Friday lunch. Housing: $32 (single) per night.

For more information write: May Sarton Conference, Westbrook College, Stevens Avenue, Portland, ME 04103.

9-12 August 1992. THE TWELFTH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CRITICAL THINKING AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM. Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, California.

Theme: "Cultivating the Reasoning Mind: Teaching, Testing, Standards, and Assessment."

For more information contact: Center for Critical Thinking and Moral Critique, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS AND PROPOSALS

NCTE is interested in reviewing a limited number of papers for a new series, *Concept Papers in English*. The *Concept Papers* series provides an outlet for works that are too long for consideration as articles, but too short for publication as monographs or books. The series intends to present leading-edge thinking and will emphasize theoretical, exploratory essays in English literacy education at all teaching levels. Essays addressing such issues as reconceptualizing literacy, restructuring curriculum, and assessment theory are especially welcome. Please submit papers of thirty-five to fifty pages in length, double-spaced, to Publications, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

OTHER NOTICES

THE AMERICAN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION is developing a newsletter. Those wishing to be on the mailing list should send a check for $5 made out to the American Literature Association to Professor Alfred Bendixen, English Department, California State University, Los Angeles, CA 90032-8110.

THE PROJECT ON THE HISTORY OF BLACK WRITING was formed in 1984, initially to identify all published novels written by African Americans since 1853. *The Afro-American Novel: A Guide for Teachers and Students*, first published in 1986, is being revised and expanded. In 1990 the project broadened its scope and objectives to provide a database and repository, housed at Northeastern University, and print and video resources available to scholars and teachers.

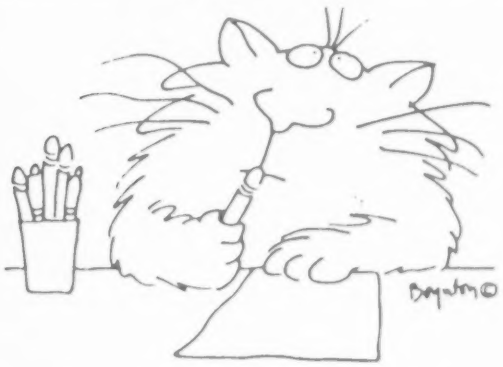
The HBW invites those interested to join. A $10 membership includes the newsletter and a 10 percent discount on database searches; a $25 membership includes the newsletter and a 15 percent discount. To join write: The Project on the History of Black Writing, Northeastern University, 406 Holmes Hall, Boston MA 02115.

WILL THEY EVER LEARN?

(Continued from Page 3)

At this time I introduce selecting and limiting the topic and formulating a thesis statement. Through discussion, students gradually realize they must think the topic through carefully and come to a conclusion about it before they can begin to organize and write. The thesis is what they will hope to prove to the reader, and they can do that only by stating the controlling idea clearly and forcefully.

However, before they can outline (I suggest an informal outline for the paragraph—the jotting down of key words or phrases and then numbering them in the order to be presented), they must be aware of the different methods by which



they can develop the thesis. Here I introduce methods of paragraph development—instances and examples, definition, cause and effect, process analysis, anecdote, and comparison/contrast—each of which I discuss later at greater length.

Next, we discuss paragraph unity and coherence. Here I have found using a childish analogy very helpful. I draw a rather vague resemblance of a "choo-choo" train (I have virtually no artistic ability), being careful, for some perverse reason, to include the cow-catcher. We then discuss the function of the locomotive (the topic sentence) and its position in the train: generally in front, sometimes at the end, and occasionally in the middle. We also consider the importance of each car in the train being destined for the same destination as the locomotive. Continuing the analogy, I show that each car represents a sentence in the paragraph. This constitutes paragraph unity.

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At this point some student usually points out that the cars are not coupled. This enables me to point out the importance of paragraph coherence and the different methods by which the writer in any way, I read a few papers to the class before I return them, inviting their constructive comments. In this way, students develop the ability to judge good, bad, and mediocre work and, perhaps, the ability to transfer this insight to their own writing. I then return the papers, making certain that everyone understands the corrections and comments. I urge students to rewrite and revise each assignment and resubmit it for reevaluation. They may do so an unlimited number of times.

I repeat this process with each of the methods of paragraph development. Throughout, though, I stress that this approach to writing is somewhat artificial, that in actuality the writer does not choose a method of organization and then choose a topic and thesis to fit the method. Rather, it works the other way. The writer has something to say and then chooses the most effective method for his intended reader.

Once they master the techniques of writing different types of expository paragraphs, I introduce them to the multi-paragraph theme. Through class discussion I make them aware that the theme is nothing more than expansion of the paragraph. The topic sentence becomes the introductory paragraph; the developmental sentences become the body paragraphs; and the concluding sentence becomes the concluding paragraph. Even the concepts of paragraph unity and coherence become theme unity and coherence. All is essentially the same except on a grander scale.

However, the informal outline will no longer suffice. After stressing once again the importance of carefully formulating a thesis statement, I show them the formal (Harvard) outline, reinforcing it with a number of exercises to help them master the form and technique. In addition, we outline a sample theme on the board.

The first full-length writing assignment is a theme of instances and/or examples. The students submit the topic, topic limitations, thesis, and outline for their themes. In addition, after having discussed different types of introductory paragraphs, I ask them to submit both a pyramid introductory paragraph and a funnel paragraph (as presented by Sheridan Baker in *The Practical Stylist*) as well as the topic sentence for each paragraph in the outline. They recognize that mechanically the sum of the topic sentences equals an introductory paragraph.

After grading and commenting on their outlines, I return them to the class. We devote class time to analyzing and discussing one of the students' outlines, which I reproduce (without the student's name). Students may then revise their outlines or, if they so choose, begin anew.

structure and punctuation.

3. I encourage students to read as extensively as possible, especially newspapers and magazines, focusing on writers' techniques. I encourage them to imitate any style they admire.

4. I look for interesting articles about writing and language to bring to class for discussion. This helps make students aware of the controversy in English and the changes taking place in the language.

5. I ask students to keep a list of unfamiliar words from their reading. I put any such word used in class on the board. In this way they learn to expand their vocabulary. (Yes, I am guilty of giving pop quizzes on these words.)

6. I suggest that they write as often as possible, certainly at least once a week. I offer to read and comment on anything they write, even after the semester.

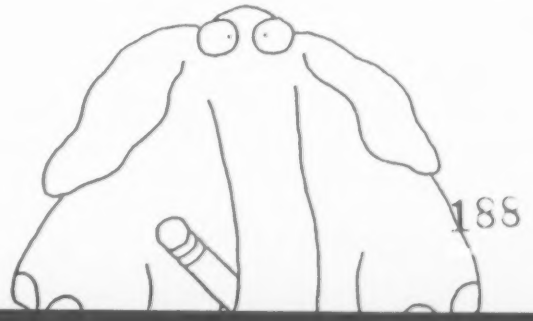
7. I schedule as many individual conferences as possible to discuss the students' writing.

8. I maintain an "open-door" policy, so that students can feel free to discuss their work with me.

9. I stress that my approach to teaching writing is mechanical, but if they learn it, they will at least be able to express their thoughts clearly and coherently.

10. I stress over and over again that every rule may be broken, that whatever is rhetorically sound is good. However, before breaking any rule, they must know what it is and what effect breaking it will have. I reinforce this with examples from literature, *e.g.*, fragments, run-ons, one sentence paragraphs.

After all this, do they all learn to write? No, of course not. But those students who are serious about improving definitely do so. I notice a marked improvement in their ability to organize and to express their thoughts. The shame, however, is that often this improvement is not sustained once they complete the course. Writing will only improve when every teacher becomes a teacher of writing. Every teacher, regardless



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At this point some student usually points out that the cars are not coupled. This enables me to point out the importance of paragraph coherence and the different methods by which it can be achieved. To be certain that students understand unity and coherence, we review a number of exercises in our text that illustrate these concepts.

Students then can do their first writing assignment: one paragraph of instances and/or examples. To prepare them, we read a number of different examples of that type of paragraph. After I am reasonably sure they understand this method, I assign them to prepare a work sheet containing the topic, the topic limitation, the thesis statement, an informal outline indicating the order, and, on a separate sheet, the paragraph. I stress the importance of following the outline slavishly, for if it is to serve its purpose, each sentence must be planned. However, before I let them loose, we discuss the importance and significance of the title. Here, again, I use a variety of examples from literature, from the theater, from the movies. We talk about the function of titles. We talk about the use of allusions in titles. We even talk about the correct punctuation and capitalization of titles.

Throughout the discussion about writing, I keep stressing the importance of planning one's writing for a specific audience. Just as we modify our language, our tone, our argument for our friends, for our parents, for our professors, for our prospective employers, so must we modify our language for different readers. We must always remember that the sole purpose of writing is to communicate our thoughts to the reader, who is free to read or not to read. Hence, it becomes imperative that we keep that reader in mind at all times. (I reinforce this concept in the process-analysis assignment: I ask them to describe the same process for two different readers.)

After students submit the writing assignments, I grade them carefully, taking special care to incorporate some positive comments and constructive criticism. Taking pains not to identify

theme on the board.

The first full-length writing assignment is a theme of instances and/or examples. The students submit the topic, topic limitations, thesis, and outline for their themes. In addition, after having discussed different types of introductory paragraphs, I ask them to submit both a pyramid introductory paragraph and a funnel paragraph (as presented by Sheridan Baker in *The Practical Stylist*) as well as the topic sentence for each paragraph in the outline. They recognize that mechanically the sum of the topic sentences equals an introductory paragraph.

After grading and commenting on their outlines, I return them to the class. We devote class time to analyzing and discussing one of the students' outlines, which I reproduce (without the student's name). Students may then revise their outlines or, if they so choose, begin anew.

For the following session they write the paper they have outlined. They must submit their outlines with the papers. I repeat this process with the comparison/contrast paper, the process analysis paper, and, depending on time available, as many of the other types as possible. However, for the last few papers I do not mandate that they submit their outlines.

On all their papers I try to make as many constructive comments as possible, being well aware that research indicates that such comments have little effect on subsequent papers unless students are given the opportunity to revise and resubmit them (Dohrer 48). I also try to remain aware of the number of comments I make, for students "cannot process one hundred comments in a paper. They get frustrated and either give up or concentrate on surface corrections" (Dohrer 54). Hence, it is critical to limit the comments and give the students ample opportunity to revise and rewrite their papers.

PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

Throughout the entire process of teaching students to write, I try to incorporate as many of the following procedures as possible (and not necessarily in the order listed):

1. I read aloud as many of the students' papers as possible—good, bad, and mediocre—asking for students' comments. This form of peer criticism fosters within the students an ability to recognize what constitutes competent writing. When possible, I reproduce select students' papers so that everyone has a copy. I also have them exchange papers and critique them.

2. I introduce grammar and mechanics as the need arises. Although research indicates no correlation between the teaching of grammar and improvement in writing, I find that teaching functional grammar helps students improve their sentence

[illegible] is that often this improvement is not sustained once they complete the course. Writing will only improve when every teacher becomes a teacher of writing. Every teacher, regardless

of whether he teaches history or auto mechanics, must insist that students use the language correctly, that they spell correctly, that they write complete sentences and unified paragraphs. Until this happens, complaints about student writing will persist, as they have for most of this century.

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REDISCOVERING MODEL ESSAYS

Teaching to the Many While Not Neglecting the Few

by ALISON KUEHNER
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"Well," said Pooh, "we keep looking for Home and not finding it, so I thought that if we looked for this Pit, we'd be sure not to find it, which would be a Good Thing, because then we might find something that we *weren't* looking for, which might be just what we *were* looking for, really" (Milne 123-124).

Winnie-the-Pooh, despite being a bear of very little brain, has hit on some truth. Sometimes we find things we are looking for without looking for them, and sometimes, if we try too hard, we can't find what we really are looking for. This is true in the Thousand Acres Woods and in the composition classroom.

What we often look for (and look at) in composition classes are model essays. Instructors regard professional writers as models of good writing and encourage students to read these writers for this reason. The myriad anthologies with titles like *Models for Writers* and the arrangement of readers by rhetorical modes and strategies testify to this fact. Now using student essays as models has become a widely recognized and utilized approach to teaching composition to the extent that most new composition readers and textbooks also include sample student essays. Studying model essays as a strategy works—I've used it myself and seen it work in colleagues' classes. However, we may want to consider what we and our students really look for when we look at sample papers.

Composition instructors, I imagine, hope students will become good writers, and many students probably share this goal. Other students, though, may be looking for "survival" writing skills—writing good enough to get

and weaknesses. When the students finish reading, they meet in groups to discuss their individual assessments of the papers. Then the groups give each paper a letter grade. Finally, the groups meet as a class to discuss each paper's strengths and weaknesses and to debate its deserved letter grade.

I circulate around the class to help groups and to answer questions, but reserve my judgment until the class has completed its full evaluation. During individual and small group assessment, students achieve a reasonable understanding of each paper's strengths and weaknesses; during the class discussion, students reach consensus on the essays' merits and grades so students are satisfied with their

encouraged me to continue presenting anonymous examples to the class (almost always in the manner described above) with some variations in the quality of the models to keep student interest. Students gained skill and confidence in assessing essays, both working individually and in groups. This had two payoffs since students could transfer these skills to reading their own drafts as they gained confidence in their ability to judge a piece of writing and could use the sample essays as standards to measure their own papers by; and the small group work became good training for peer-group evaluations since students began to trust each other's judgments and learned how to talk about writing with each other. Coming together in the final class discussion allowed me to guide students in their judgments and in assessing a paper's merits. For instance, once students had determined the strong and weak aspects of a paper, we could arrange these in hierarchical order, debating the most significant strengths and weaknesses in a paper and determining what to tackle first in revision.

As I said, I vary the sample papers to keep the exercise fresh and the students honestly evaluating the models. For instance, presenting two very different "B" papers encourages students to explore various ways to approach an assignment. Also, using "B" models can help pull up "C" students. Sample papers can be tailored to address specific problems in the class: for example, if many students in the class are having difficulties extending their ideas, I will present a paper lacking development and a well developed one. I usually keep a large repertoire of sample essays for this very reason but am not above producing an essay myself or modifying one to gain the desired focus. Also, models can be used to practice revisions for instance

for them. And I like to use examples of student essays from the class, especially ones that have successfully emulated models or have improved, to show the class how the transfer of skills and new techniques can be achieved.

Using model student essays as a way to give students decent examples of writing, as a way to sharpen analytical skills, as a training ground for peer evaluation, as a practice for revision, as a way to demystify grading criteria, and for fun, inspiration, and whatever else might be discovered along the way, is a Good Thing and just what we *were* looking for, really, in the composition class. As Pooh might say, it's rather like finding a pot full of honey in the cupboard when you least expect it.

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Ms. Kuehner has used model papers in all levels of writing classes and even to some extent with literature classes. She teaches a range of composition classes, from developmental writing to freshman composition to critical thinking and literature. She has been teaching community college for five years, and this is her second year as a full-time instructor at Ohlone College.

***inside english* DEADLINES**

modes and strategies testify to this fact. How using student essays as models has become a widely recognized and utilized approach to teaching composition to the extent that most new composition readers and textbooks also include sample student essays. Studying model essays as a strategy works—I've used it myself and seen it work in colleagues' classes. However, we may want to consider what we and our students really look for when we look at sample papers.

Composition instructors, I imagine, hope students will become good writers, and many students probably share this goal. Other students, though, may be looking for "survival" writing skills—writing good enough to get them through a composition class with a "C" and on to other areas of study—while some students may feel they are at the bottom of the writing pile, having been labeled "remedial" for years. When we hold up a model essay (by an "A" student or a published author), these students may not imagine themselves capable of producing such a polished piece of writing. They may become discouraged, frustrated, or annoyed that expectations seemingly are set beyond their capabilities, despite a teacher's good intentions and encouraging words. Perhaps if we presented model essays in different ways we could reach more students. Let me explain how I use model essays in my composition classes and what I have discovered, without really looking.

STUDENT ESSAYS AS MODELS

Toward the final stages of working on an essay, when most students are revising and polishing their drafts, I distribute anonymous sample essays from previous students who have completed the same assignment. I purposely set up the model papers to represent "A" and "C" examples, anticipating that students will see the marked difference between the two examples and, therefore, successfully identify the strengths and weaknesses because of the glaring contrasts between the two papers. Students read the essays silently, writing down what they feel are the essays' strengths

I circulate around the class to help groups and to answer questions, but reserve my judgment until the class has completed its full evaluation. During individual and small group assessment, students achieve a reasonable understanding of each paper's strengths and weaknesses; during the class discussion, students reach consensus on the essays' merits and grades so students are satisfied with their own evaluations. My role is to validate students' assessments and to make explicit the purpose of the task: students should strive to imitate the "A" paper, polishing their drafts-in-progress to rise above the "C" paper.

However, to my chagrin, some students turned in essays that looked more like the "C" models, with techniques consciously borrowed from the sample "C" paper. I wasn't sure where I had gone wrong! But then I began to reevaluate. The model "C" paper was organized with a clear thesis and topic sentences, although it tended not to be as developed, original in thought, or skillful in use of language as the "A" example. But the "C" model and its imitators were definitely solid, if mediocre, papers. Thinking about the drafts of these students and their writing skills, I realized these were the weaker students in the class. They usually discovered something in the model papers that they actually did need in their own writing: most often structure and order, which although predictable and uninspired to my English-teacher eye, was a saving grace to the muddle and confusion these students might have produced as essays. Just beginning to learn the rules of the game, they needed this model just above their abilities to help them succeed.

I also discovered other advantages to using this particular exercise. First of all, students enjoyed reading these sample essays. This keep the exercise fresh and the students honestly evaluating the models. For instance, presenting two very different "B" papers encourages students to explore various ways to approach an assignment. Also, using "B" models can help pull up "C" students. Sample papers can be tailored to address specific problems in the class: for example, if many students in the class are having difficulties extending their ideas, I will present a paper lacking development and a well developed one. I usually keep a large repertoire of sample essays for this very reason but am not above producing an essay myself or modifying one to gain the desired focus. Also, models can be used to practice revision; for instance, students can rewrite an underdeveloped paper to better develop its paragraphs or use a model to discuss ways to revise.

One might question why I ask students to grade these sample papers (especially if students are still in the process of drafting their own work, which obviously is not ready for a grade), but this requirement has had a desirable consequence. Occasionally students will agree on the strengths and weaknesses of a paper, but not on the grade. This opens up a discussion of the grading criteria for the course. Often again, it is a matter of evaluating and ranking strengths and weaknesses. A disorganized essay lacking a clear thesis would be hard pressed to earn a "B" no matter how skillfully written. Students begin to understand the grading system, which does not seem so subjective when demystified and discussed.

Finally, not to neglect the few students who may not see the direct implications between the model essays and their own papers, I ask students to write down what they learned from the class session or what they could apply to a paper in progress. This direct, conscious effort encourages students to make the connection between the models and their own writing in ways that make sense to them. Mostly, I find that students enjoy reading other students' writing, which can be inspiring

community college for five years, and this is her second year as a full-time instructor at Ohlone College.

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1 August 1992

DECEMBER 1992 issue
Creative Writing, Creative Reading, Creative Teaching
10 October 1992

TALKING BACK

Personalized Cassettes and ESL Students

by LA VERGNE ROSOW
Golden West College

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article was written in response to two inside english *articles: Steve Flick, "Overcoming 'Feedback Block': Using Audio-Cassettes in Writing Classes" May 1990: 3+; and Gloria Heller, "'Red' Tape, or Correcting with Cassettes (Part 2)" March 1991:3.*

What has more good surprises than a fistful of Post-its and a popular novel? That was a riddle I gave myself as I drove from one school to another. As a battle-worn graduate student, trying to do unto those in my English-as-a-Second-Language classes what I would like done unto me, I had found that an excellent way to eliminate stress about the writing process was to stack my student writings next to the computer, sit down, and stay there until I'd written long letters to the writers, rewritten passages of their long papers, and completely rewritten shorter papers. In the rewrites I demonstrated those rules I expected would become assimilated over time (and for class presentation kept track of those errors that occurred in numerous papers). In the letters I asked questions that might lead a student to reorganize or refocus a paper. Then the revisions could go on until the student was either satisfied that the paper did what it was supposed to do or bored with the topic. That process did several theoretically sound things:

—It eliminated the visual offense of error correction right on the student work, one of the leading culprits in life-long writer's block (Elbow 1973, Graves 1983, Krashen 1984, Smith 1986).

—It lowered the Affective Filter, that stress barrier that prevents learning from taking portant decisions about his or her own pedagogy (Rosow 1990, 1991b).

In addition to being theoretically sound, responding by computer caused my students to produce tremendous volumes of writing with quality that spiraled upward. They obviously studied the tomes written expressly for them at their levels—ragged, underlined, and highlighted copies were frequently brought in for clarification—and the new vocabulary I planted became part of the students' repertoires without direct instruction.

However, the process did one other thing; it took up almost every living, breathing minute I had at my computer. Though my writing practice was up, my output mainly consisted of specialized papers limited to audiences of one. And when Richard Ullrich, the ESL coordinator at Golden West College, heard what I was doing, he also foresaw the potential for burnout that I had to deny until he offered another way. Ullrich was using cassette tapes with his Freshman English 100 students very much the way that Steve Flick described in his May 1990 *inside english* article. I decided to give it a go and within one month had sent my advisor a memo assuring him that I was never going back to my old grindstone. I could continue theoretically sound practice without reams of computer paper. Now my students turned in their original papers, which they had photocopied for themselves, with blank cassette tapes.

The start-up was not without discoveries. After several students asked me who the man was who had been talking on my tape, I discovered that when my batteries were running down, my voice deepened. And, though Flick reports that he can get two hundred words per minute on tape, part of my process in speaking very distinctly (caretaker speech

Over time I modified the process, depending on the class level, and began to use it for absolutely individualized teaching. Last summer, for example, I had a huge class of "intermediate" students who were of mixed ability, not only in English but also in native-language literacy and schooling, and who came from at least a dozen different cultures. But the one common feature nearly all students have by the time they become intermediate is some degree of writing anxiety. After little time in a formal system, students experience so much error correction of surface details that they are hard-pressed to produce writings of substance.

One of the main elements in my teaching is learning theory. When the students understand the reasons behind what is going on in the classroom, they are better equipped to evaluate the activities and participate in their own lesson development[1]. For example, at every session I read aloud to the students. This does many things, I explain. First of all, because they like it, it lowers their "Affective Filters" so they can learn the new vocabulary in the passages. It also helps them hear correct pronunciation (It is my dialect, so it must be correct—right?) as they see words they might mispronounce if they didn't hear them. Meanwhile, they are getting exposure to the flow of written forms of the language that are quite different from the spoken ones. I point out these features in brief lectures, supplemented with short teaching papers that I read aloud to them as they follow along. They know that this is expected to have a positive influence on their writing. They also know that the higher their interest in the subject matter the more likely they are to benefit from it. So I offer to read anything the students bring in (letters, news articles, children's

vocabulary and grammatical structures reappear in their writing—without error focus.

In the credit/no credit classes I teach at Golden West College, thank heavens language learning can be the objective. Anyone who ever imagined that adults line up to take community college classes just to get grades or credits misses the point. My students take my classes to learn English because they want to be successful members of our society. They need no artificial motivators or evaluations. They can FEEL change and growth. They tell ME if language development is taking place and how to make it happen better for them. I listen. I record. I listen. And then I record again. And when I get it right, they tell me—in English that has never been used in such a way before.

They see the tape process as a tremendous boon.[2] Numerous times I've been confronted with an embarrassed student who fears a lack of communication might lead to that disaster

(TALKING BACK, Continued on Page 16)

TEACHER

My clever colleagues carry no
occupational traces when they leave school.
Like bright senior attorneys, they file away
their past encounters, leave empty.
Like Machiavellian politicians
they admit little that is past, nothing
that is present to their thin briefcases.
The future is a cabinet of empty folders.
The metal case of the businessman pleases
them in a land devoid of respect
for their former soft dreams
now hardened from the
crude brilliance of more learning

errors that occurred in numerous papers). In the letters I asked questions that might lead a student to reorganize or refocus a paper. Then the revisions could go on until the student was either satisfied that the paper did what it was supposed to do or bored with the topic. That process did several theoretically sound things:

—It eliminated the visual offense of error correction right on the student work, one of the leading culprits in life-long writer's block (Elbow 1973, Graves 1983, Krashen 1984, Smith 1986).

—It lowered the Affective Filter, that stress barrier that prevents learning from taking place (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen 1982, Krashen 1984).

—It gave Comprehensible Input, information at a level that was appropriate to the learner (Krashen 1985).

—It allowed me to provide "sheltered" instruction, using only as much English as the individual seemed able to handle (Crawford 1989, Rosow 1990, 1991a).

—It eliminated killer boredom, one of the major preventers of learning (Elbow, Rosow 1989, Smith 1986).

—It saved me the trouble of doing the kind of error correction that has proven ineffective time and again and sometimes destructive to writing development (Elbow, Freire 1973, Krashen 1984, Langer and Applebee, Rosow 1988, Smith).

—It empowered the learner to make im-

cle. I decided to give it a go and within one month had sent my advisor a memo assuring him that I was never going back to my old grindstone. I could continue theoretically sound practice without reams of computer paper. Now my students turned in their original papers, which they had photocopied for themselves, with blank cassette tapes.

The start-up was not without discoveries. After several students asked me who the man was who had been talking on my tape, I discovered that when my batteries were running down, my voice deepened. And, though Flick reports that he can get two hundred words per minute on tape, part of my process is speaking very distinctly (caretaker speech, some would label it), making me a really slow talker when the batteries run down. And though I'd been using a microcasette recorder for personal use and research notes for several years, I discovered that almost none of my students had miniplayers. Although my greatest concern—accessibility to some kind of player for all socioeconomic levels of student—proved unfounded (every student had access to some standard cassette player), I discovered that I really did need a good quality recorder. My little portable that had done an adequate job of playing "Lemon Tree" so students could sing along was not capable of making good quality recordings. When I switched to a better recorder, I no longer had to wait until my neighbor's dog went to sleep and my son was off the telephone to get static-free recordings.

Subsequently, I discovered a great deal of freedom. Now that I'm usually using just the tape-response system, I'm free to drive down to the beach, open my car windows, and risk a little more background noise than an occasional seagull squawk above the ocean's roar. A few dated notes on the original paper, which becomes part of the student's portfolio, allow me to keep track of what I've elaborated on tape. I never backtrack the tape, even when I misread and have to correct. I just let 'er rip and prove the obvious—I'm human, seagulls and all.

correct pronunciation (It is my dialect, so it must be correct—right?) as they see words they might mispronounce if they didn't hear them. Meanwhile, they are getting exposure to the flow of written forms of the language that are quite different from the spoken ones. I point out these features in brief lectures, supplemented with short teaching papers that I read aloud to them as they follow along. They know that this is expected to have a positive influence on their writing. They also know that the higher their interest in the subject matter the more likely they are to benefit from it. So I offer to read anything the students bring in (letters, news articles, children's books) onto their individual tapes. The student appreciation of this has been so overwhelming that I've had to modify the offer to anything I can read in less than ten minutes. And from time to time I'm asked to sing a song introduced in class or painfully copied down from the radio. This never came up during my computer-only days. (I do still write letters, but not as many, and then read them onto the tapes.)

One side effect of these personalized readings is that on the tapes I can promote writing in the midst of and related to high interest messages. Comments like "You had a situation like this in your family, didn't you? I'd really like to read about it" help students connect personal meaning with published text and, perhaps, help them think of themselves as writers.

Another side effect of these readings is that I am able to use their chosen topics to broaden their reading experience. If a student gives me a passage on oppression, I add a bonus reading with an accompanying photocopy of an article on freedom of speech. If a student gives me an article about child abuse, I may read an article from Ann Landers or a passage from Haim Ginot. In the process, I pause to discuss word choice, grammatical structures, punctuation, or phrasing, as used by the expert. It is amazing how high the level of comprehension gets when the interest of the individual learner is engaged. And the

TEACHER

My clever colleagues carry no
occupational traces when they leave school.
Like bright senior attorneys, they file away
their past encounters, leave empty.
Like Machiavellian politicians
they admit little that is past, nothing
that is present to their thin briefcases.
The future is a cabinet of empty folders.
The metal case of the businessman pleases
them in a land devoid of respect –
for their former soft dreams
now hardened from the
crude brilliance of mere learning
to the fear of the rough hands
Of those who dare to ask, Why?
Yet my colleagues' process is graceful;
the attitude of their
slender limbs elicits respect.
The book of their life is separate
from their work; it must be lean and dry
like the model they dreamed of marrying once.
They are very different from
all but their cleverest students
who, as proper Aristotelians,
are learning not to teach
but to dispense designs.

I shuffle, shrug,
stuff my barbed insecurities,
along with certain notes to keep them alive,
into a blue sack, hoist it to my back, and
scuttle—
shoulders slumped, muscles bunched—
out away from school to a lonely place
where, like a greedy pack rat,
I pore over my new treasures,
the work of my poor family of learners;
and I measure the riches of my work
by the scrawled signs of lovers
who do not laugh at the means
by which I measure my wealth:
the irritating hump on my back,
the bulk suspended from my neck.

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REVIEWS

(Continued from Page 9)

"wishy-washy" rather than critical thinking, whereas the Sophist argues that "dialectical thinking and writing builds community" (61-62). The Teacher assigns a dialogue, and several student compositions show how students play diverse viewpoints against each other in a dramatic way.

This kind of writing also enables students to view all writing as dialogue. The Radical offers a "verbatim patchwork" of quotations from E.D. Hirsch and Paolo Freire on the issue of literacy, which, in turn, leads to the idea of a research paper as a dialogue. Students compile diverse viewpoints by quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing various writers on a controversial topic such as the impact of MTV on adolescents. They read a published debate on defense and disarmament policy through a series of written opinions by Gene La Rocque, E.R. Zumwalt, Kenneth Adelman, and others. The Epistemologist points out that Admiral La Rocque's position, written in a formalist-objective manner, seems very pleasing and persuasive only to readers uninformed with all the other viewpoints. The Administrator praises La Rocque for effective writing because it is decisive and organized, but the Sophist points out that effective writing can be defined differently "as the presentation of several viewpoints which leads you to an informed decision . . . or cultivates open-mindedness" (118). The Teacher says that at a certain point students will move from a focus on dialogue to a focus on definition because definitions are the "building blocks" of dialectical writing. Some exercises on multiple definitions follow, and then the Epistemologist invites all to read *Phaedrus* because is "addresses so brilliantly the issues of definition and dialectical writing that we have been discussing" (126).

But dialectic as exemplified in many of Plato's dialogues is hardly what Covino wants us to practice: entertain multiple definitions of a subject or thesis, challenge our own as-

ior. The Sophist and the Administrator quote different passages from Raphael Demos, an expert on Plato, that turn out to be contradictory: "Plato's philosophy takes the form of wonder, of continual questioning"; and "Plato is sure of himself, he is convinced of the truth" (178). From this detection of contradictions in Plato and Plato experts, the next logical step is to writing as a drama of meanings, as play on words. *Phaedrus* is a play on words like "love" and "writing" and "soul."

Socrates' definitions are often tied to metaphors, since language is inescapably metaphorical. However, metaphor itself can be redefined. It is not just poetic or explicit; it is also hidden and conceptual, as Lakoff and Johnson have shown in *Metaphors We Live By*. An exercise follows in detecting conceptual metaphors in the magazine article "Your Brilliant Career" by Rebecca Chase. A student shows that even though Chase intends to help women improve their careers, her metaphors betray an acceptance of women's subservient position in the corporate world. The Epistemologist then offers Susan Sontag's "AIDS and its Metaphors" as an example of this kind of analysis: Sontag "shows that attitudes toward [AIDS] . . . are tied to metaphors that extend back throughout history and across cultures" (191).

Next, the Teacher assigns one-act plays that offer various definitions of certain words. Three students compose on magic, poverty, and drugs respectively. They invent characters and settings. They also testify to enjoying this "creative" assignment. The characters of Covino's dialogue admire different one-act plays

made no effort to make his materials user-friendly. One must come to this book having already committed herself to "dialectical" writing, not before.

Moreover, like Plato's, Covino's dialectic seems predetermined. The Sophist and the Epistemologist get the best and most persuasive lines; the other voices are merely expedient in advancing the argument. Even the student compositions spring fully-armed like Athena from the head of Zeus. No drafts, no intermediate steps. I, for one, would like to know just what preparations went into the one-act plays, what sequence of prior assignments. Or just how Kirstin Axelson learned to deconstruct metaphors. I have tried the same Lakoff and Johnson strategies in a UCLA junior class with far less spectacular results and would benefit from knowing how Covino guides his students to the level of sophistication he claims for them. Does he teach any freshmen classes? His contextbook should provide more context.

The community college freshmen I teach now pose a range of pedagogical problems Covino does not even seem aware of. They come to classes having read very little. Except for a brief discussion on detecting conceptual metaphors, nowhere else does Covino address strategies for critical reading. Yet where does one get multiple voices and perspectives if not from reading critically? This dilemma has not been sufficiently addressed by either traditionalists or post-modernists, exponents of cultural literacy or of Freireian advocates of consciousness engagement.

In *Phaedrus*, Socrates assumes a shared cultural literacy. Phaedrus knows all the myths, histories, and contemporary rhetorical practices, so Socrates easily carries on a long and complex dialogue with him. But how does a teacher in multicultural and increasingly non-reading America engage students in a Socratic dialogue? Students are not faithful answerers of strategic questions, and discussions often falter because they have either not read or not understood the readings. However, I would not be teaching if I thought the situation is hopeless. I am only trying to point out that Covino's classically derived dialectical method does not even raise all the urgent questions, far less answer or explore them. Thus, the dialogue continues.

☐ Covino, William A. *A Dialogue on Writing, for Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1990. 310 pages.

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ONE-TO-ONE

(Continued from Page 10)

on a single incident in hopes of freeing up the voice. Finally I point out his evident purpose, suggesting that he choose the relevant details and delete extra words, repetition, and editorializing. When he next returns, the voice is unchanged, but he has edited for organization and detail, shearing off a couple of pages in the process—an improvement.

Steve writes about going into the Marine Corps. The first couple of pages read like a diary with every detail included, one incident after another. This is vivid stuff; he quotes the sergeant's insults, describes the bullying

proud of it.

By the end of the day, I am exhausted but satisfied. While in class I address the group and the writing process in general; in conference I concern myself with each student, each voice, each partially shaped text. In class, my comments on the writing process—free-writing, organization, focus, specific details—may or may not create an awareness in the student of how an abstract concept connects with her paper. The student doesn't necessarily know what she needs to do to her draft to improve it. The truth is that until I read it, neither do I. In conference, we discover together, author and reader/editor, what the

ing can be defined differently as the presentation of several viewpoints which leads you to an informed decision . . . or cultivates open-mindedness" (118). The Teacher says that at a certain point students will move from a focus on dialogue to a focus on definition because definitions are the "building blocks" of dialectical writing. Some exercises on multiple definitions follow, and then the Epistemologist invites all to read *Phaedrus* because is "addresses so brilliantly the issues of definition and dialectical writing that we have been discussing" (126).

But dialectic as exemplified in many of Plato's dialogues is hardly what Covino wants us to practice: entertain multiple definitions of a subject or thesis; challenge our own assumptions; and arrive at an open-minded, pluralistic, complex perspective. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates is the questioner and Phaedrus is the answerer. Socrates can detect contradictions in Phaedrus' answers and lead him to a superior understanding of love or writing, but Phaedrus is denied the role of a questioner or challenger of Socrates' assumptions. The result is that we are led by Socrates to Plato's certainties about love, writing, sophists, and other subjects.

This, it can be argued, is propaganda, not dialectic. Covino makes good use of his dialogue form to skirt this difficulty. The Expediter complains that Socrates can't seem to follow his own advice regarding unity. The Radical accuses Socrates of dictatorial behavshows that even though Chase intends to help women improve their careers, her metaphors betray an acceptance of women's subservient position in the corporate world. The Epistemologist then offers Susan Sontag's "AIDS and its Metaphors" as an example of this kind of analysis: Sontag "shows that attitudes toward [AIDS] . . . are tied to metaphors that extend back throughout history and across cultures" (191).

Next, the Teacher assigns one-act plays that offer various definitions of certain words. Three students compose on magic, poverty, and drugs respectively. They invent characters and settings. They also testify to enjoying this "creative" assignment. The characters of Covino's dialogue admire different one-act plays for different reasons. The Sophist points out that we live in a post-industrial information age when finding a great variety of definitions, ideas, or solutions is more valuable than the simplification or clarity of an earlier age. We then read Montaigne's essay "On Coaches" and see a diagram of connections between a great variety of ideas that would be impossible in a formalistic-objective mode.

Covino has not written a textbook here, though he claims to have written a "contextbook" intended for college students and teachers. As a college teacher I am glad to have this book, and I will try to use many of the ideas and suggestions it offers, but I will not ask my students to read it. Covino seems to be preaching to the converted and has

ONE-TO-ONE

(Continued from Page 10)

on a single incident in hopes of freeing up the voice. Finally I point out his evident purpose, suggesting that he choose the relevant details and delete extra words, repetition, and editorializing. When he next returns, the voice is unchanged, but he has edited for organization and detail, shearing off a couple of pages in the process—an improvement.

Steve writes about going into the Marine Corps. The first couple of pages read like a diary with every detail included, one incident after another. This is vivid stuff; he quotes the sergeant's insults, describes the bullying and routine punishments. Some of this shocks me; some makes me laugh out loud. He ends with his graduation from boot camp when a new recruit salutes him: "I knew that I was one of the few, the proud, the Marines." My first reaction is "Keep the ending." But I ask about the beginning. It seems to take a long time to decide on the Marines; what's the problem? Then I notice, buried on the second page, a comment on his fear of what he had heard about the Marines. Is that it? I ask him to think about his purpose, to consider his fears and how he overcame them, to pare down the warm-up paragraphs so that the whole piece can gain focus. When he comes in with the streamlined version, the voice and energy come through; he's proud of it.

By the end of the day, I am exhausted but satisfied. While in class I address the group and the writing process in general; in conference I concern myself with each student, each voice, each partially shaped text. In class, my comments on the writing process—free-writing, organization, focus, specific details—may or may not create an awareness in the student of how an abstract concept connects with her paper. The student doesn't necessarily know what she needs to do to her draft to improve it. The truth is that until I read it, neither do I. In conference, we discover together, author and reader/editor, what the student wants to say, what the reader needs to know, and how this text can fulfill the writer's purpose. I know at the end of the day that together we have made progress. At the end of the term no longer am I surprised when students say, "Conferences helped me the most."

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Virginia Kolberg Duym teaches part time at Monterey Peninsula College. She writes that "in any one class we encounter students at various levels of experience and with their own strengths and weaknesses. This article addresses my approach to all levels in a single class."

DIALECTICAL JOURNAL

(Continued from Page 7)

Another way to prepare students for the dialectical journal is to spend some class time having them generate written dialogue to each other. I pair the students and tell each one to write down a comment or a question about a piece of writing we're discussing—a poem, story, essay, novel, or, quite possibly, students' own essays. After a few minutes I tell each writer to exchange papers with a partner and write a response to the partner's comment or question. Then they exchange again, writing a response to the response, and exchange again, and so on for at least twenty minutes. This experience creates a real dialogue in which a dialectical process occurs—a development and deepening of an idea, a *discovery*—and it is recorded. The value of dialogue becomes apparent, and students can see how they might carry on an inner dialogue in their journals.

The dialectical journal is an on-going process that gains force over time. It succeeds because students control the process of discovery themselves. Yes, there will always be some students whose journal entries are mundane or mechanical—there are no such things as miracles—but in most cases I see concepts being formed, comparisons being made, ideas being carried to outer limits, questions being posed, and personal experience being brought to bear.

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Sheila Thorne is a lecturer at San Jose State University for both the English Department and the Linguistics and Language Development Department. She teaches all levels of composition (Developmental, Freshman, Advanced) and Critical Thinking, and is a Teacher-Consultant with the San Jose Area Writing Project.

TALKING BACK

(Continued from Page 14)

of disasters—Teacher Records Over Earlier Recording. Almost as often those who don't trust me with the technology give me a new tape every time.

One hot summer recently there was no operational air conditioning—in Southern California, buildings have been—YES—designed NOT to have outside windows. My students wrote about that and I responded on tape. They wrote about registration problems and I responded on tape. They wrote interviews of classmates and I responded on tape. They went to the library and found information on the rainforests, with which many of them had personal experience, and I responded to those writings on tape. In short, the writing became a vehicle for discussing in English any topic that needed airing—in America, at school, or elsewhere. Whether at home in my rocker or at the beach, I could read their frustrations and concerns and respond in kind on the cassette.

There was a tremendous return on the recorder investment. These second-language learners began to use phrases I'd put on their tapes. Their writing reflected ideas I'd given only in English on tape, responded to questions posed on tape, and increased in volume. A mechanic from Vietnam began to write about the political influences over the rainforest he had known. His half-page essay had grown to more than eight pages by the fifth draft, and the research he was compelled to do would have done justice to many graduate-level assignments. Two sisters from Mexico began to do intensive reading in English about those regions of their native country they had never heard of before the class. The reading in English was essential to the writing they were just starting to feel secure doing.

As referenced earlier, I do half a dozen formal and informal teacher/methods/materials evaluations per semester. In voice, ballot, and survey-form votes the cassette tapes have come out consistent winners (based on over three hundred students since their introduction). But because I had three huge entry-level classes in fall 1991 and because of the tremendous number of requests to have me record stories and articles introduced in class, I have made generic tapes for the library media center where students may either listen to instructors' tapes or duplicate them free of charge. The generic tapes and texts are used and appreciated but not as much as the individualized ones. One beginning-level student has braved a letter telling me that the students are happier getting their own tapes, and when they are happier, he explained in almost academic terms, they will learn more. Unsure of my ability to comprehend the importance of this communique, he organized a multicultural group to share in a special conference on the critical issue of tape use.

For the benefit of anyone still pondering what could possibly have more good surprises than a fistful of Post-its and a popular novel, the answer is: A heap of cassette tapes and a stack of rewrites.

NOTES

[1] Through formal surveys and individual student comments I get feedback throughout the semester. The students feel empowered when they can see their ideas having an impact, and I get a sense of accomplishment when I'm able to make immediate improvements.

[2] I learned quite by accident that the cassette tapes may teach laterally—beyond the classroom, beyond the school. When I visited one of my students, her brother was very surprised to meet the face behind the tapes he'd been using right along with her. He told me they were very helpful.

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La Vergne Rosow has just completed an Ed.D. in Intercultural Education with an emphasis in language teaching and literacy at the University of Southern California. Her dissertation research focussed on learner empowerment through theory.

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INSIDE

inside english:

ECCTYC

Looks at The Challenge of Teaching English in the 1990s

Brenda Banks prepares students for essay exams by devoting the last four days of freshman comp to the course final and, thereby, provides students with strategies to approach essay exams in any course. Page 3

Does Shakespeare belong in freshman comp? Yes, asserts Roger Ekins, because, "we owe it to our students to help them achieve something approximating cultural literacy." Page 3

A "bad" class doesn't have to be "bad" all semester. Jim Piper provides some strategies for molding "bad" classes into "good" ones. Page 5

We can retain "at risk" students by adopting some or all of John Gardenhire's twenty techniques. Page 7

As classroom researchers, Jim

HELPING STUDENTS DO THE THINKING

Empowering Students, Enlivening Classes

by MARLENE MARTIN
Monterey Peninsula College

One of the dilemmas we face in teaching composition is expressed by our professor friend in the cartoon below. We have been BA'd, MA'd, perhaps PhD'd, MLA'd, ECCTYC'd and CCCC'd. By the time we stand before our students, we have been to Olympus. Why, then, when we know so much, when our teaching time is so precious, should we turn blocks of it over to *them*, those so desperately in need of our wisdom?

Most of us—including our traditional-looking professor buddy in the cartoon—spent our student days in an approach Paul Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* termed "the banking concept of education":

> In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing . . . [In this system] the teacher . . . makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. (58)

> In an age of overwhelming bits of information to which we are exposed, education must enable learners to *pattern* their knowing, to make it personally meaningful, to render it useful and retrievable, in short to make it stick. (16)

Rico calls for involving students intellectually, emotionally, improvisationally, and actively rather than passively.

> As a result, they are unlikely to forget . . . they have been active participants in the creation of meaning. This process allows them to play, gives them permission to improvise, to produce

bad news for a lot of us traditional learners.

Why don't they count? Because our world is changing too fast for us to get credit for information we learned a decade, or two decades, or in my case three decades ago in college. Memorized information simply does not prepare us for the criticial thinking and evaluating skills that help us cope in our rapidly changing world. In our information-blitzed world, we can provide only a few of the facts our students will need. Furthermore, many of the specific facts we teach our students rapidly become out-dated. In a traditional, instructor-centered classroom, students look to the instructor for the Truth. In a rapidly changing world, students must learn to find,

in any course. Page 3

Does Shakespeare belong in freshman comp? Yes, asserts Roger Ekins, because, "we owe it to our students to help them achieve something approximating cultural literacy." Page 3

A "bad" class doesn't have to be "bad" all semester. Jim Piper provides some strategies for molding "bad" classes into "good" ones. Page 5

We can retain "at risk" students by adopting some or all of John Gardenhire's twenty techniques. Page 6

As classroom researchers Jim Whearty and Kim Wolterbeek reaffirmed their belief that "good teaching requires a steady exploration of how students learn." Page 13

By allowing students to "learn with their whole being," James Musgrave increases retention in his classes and prepares students for the multicultural world in which they will live and work. Page 15

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over to *them*, those so desperately in need of our wisdom?

Most of us—including our traditional-looking professor buddy in the cartoon—spent our student days in an approach Paul Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* termed "the banking concept of education":

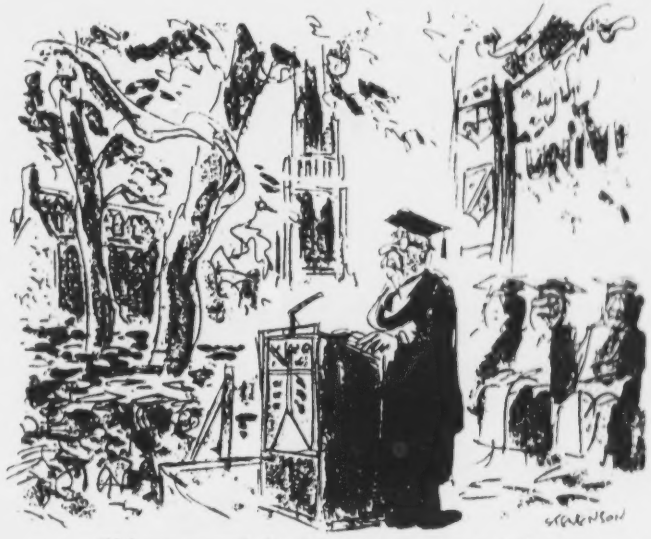
> In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing . . . [In this system] the teacher . . . makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. (58)

What's wrong with this banking method of teaching? Fascinatingly enough, part of the answer to this question is illustrated by my own struggles over nearly three decades to be an effective teacher. When I was a student, my primary teaching model was clearly the banking concept. And now, on the frontlines of education in 1992, I don't have all the answers in my account.

That's a disappointment for those of us educated when I was. I learned by sitting at the feet of great men (and in my student days of the early sixties at the University of Michigan, it was great *men*) who told me what the material they had assigned me to read meant. I was a good student—I took notes well, and I had a good memory—so mine was a relatively safe bank account in which to make deposits. As long as I didn't stray from the text of the lecture, or from the words and ideas of the experts that I found enshrined in the library, my papers were blessed with the golden grades that got me into grad school.

Since I was acculturated to be all things to all people, I'll use the banking concept of educating to tell you what's wrong with this method. And just to show you that I'm not stuck in the early sixties when I sat at the feet of great *men*, I'll quote Gabriele Rico writing in the March 1989 *English Journal*:

> Rico calls for involving students intellectually, emotionally, improvisationally, and actively rather than passively.
>
> As a result, they are unlikely to forget . . . they have been active participants in the creation of meaning. This process allows them to play, gives them permission to improvise, to produce idiosyncratic responses, to become emotionally involved, in short, to interact with content in highly creative ways. Every new idea to be learned requires rediscovery by the learner, or as Piaget observed, "For anyone truly to learn something for himself, he must recreate it for himself." (16)



"I know so much that I don't know where to begin."

Drawing by Stevenson; © 1987 *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc.

Let's look at another, closely related reason for involving students in the learning-teaching process: In a recent Mike Twohy *New Yorker* cartoon, Saint Peter checks a hefty tome, while a supplicant at the Pearly Gates exclaims, "You're kidding! You count SATs?" Lest you're worried, I have it on Excellent Authority that Mike Twohy is wrong. In fact, SATs don't count. That's

ly changing world. In our information-blitzed world, we can provide only a few of the facts our students will need. Furthermore, many of the specific facts we teach our students rapidly become out-dated. In a traditional, instructor-centered classroom, students look to the instructor for the Truth. In a rapidly changing world, students must learn to find, evaluate, and organize information for themselves. They must learn how to become their own authorities.

And even if memorized information were adequate to prepare our students for their future, all community college students aren't all the traditional-learners just out of high school who are whizzes at learning by memorizing. Currently, 10 percent of America's total college population is enrolled in one of California's 107 community colleges where the average student age is twenty-nine. More than half these students are women. More than a quarter are ethnic minorities. Two-thirds are self-supporting,

(EMPOWERING STUDENTS, Continued on Page 4)

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Notices

Please send announcements and information about workshops, conferences, calls for papers, and other activities of interest to the profession to "Notices" by the deadlines noted in each issue. They will be run on a space-available basis.

CONFERENCES

28-30 May 1992. AMERICAN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE. Bahia Resort Hotel, San Diego, California.

Conference Fees: $35 preregistration; $10 for retired instructors, independent scholars, and students.

Hotel Fees: $74 (single), $80 (double) per night.

For more information write Professor Alfred Bendixon, English Department, California State University, Los Angeles, CA 90032-8110.

21-27 June 1992. SIERRA NEVADA WRITING INSTITUTE: A SUMMER WORKSHOP FOR WRITERS AND TEACHERS. North Lake Tahoe. Kings Beach, California.

Staff: Director Stephen Tchudi (Professor of English at the University of Nevada, Reno); Susan Tchudi (Professor of English and Director of Core Composition at the University of Nevada, Reno); Mark Waldo (Director of the Writing Center at the University of Nevada, Reno) and Gailmarie Pahmeier-Henry (a widely published poet with interests in Western literature and sports literature).

Morning Workshops will bring together individual instructors and writers with common interests. Afternoon Explorations will include a variety of activities from High Sierra "journal jaunts" to "how to publish" workshops.

Registration fee: $495. Includes two graduate level academic credits. Housing and air fare are extra.

For more information call the Division of Continuing Education at (702) 784-4062; toll-free, (800) 233-8928.

25-27 June 1992. 1992 YOUNG RHETORICIANS' CONFERENCE. Monterey Peninsula College.

Speakers: Peter Elbow from the University of Massachusetts will act as Rhetorician of the Year; Shirley Brice Heath of Stanford University will speak on "the crisis of American public education and the responsibilities of the college teacher." Other featured speakers include Gabriele Rico, Nell Pickett, Hans Guth, Richard Graves, and Susan Becker.

Registration: "Reasonable conference fees for colleagues gainfully employed; nominal fees for part-timers and other victims of the system." Conference rates are available at San Carlos Inn, (800) 227-6332 or the Holiday Inn Resort, (800) 238-1694.

8-11 July 1992. THE PENN STATE CONFERENCE ON RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION. Penn State's University Park Campus in State College, Pennsylvania. The conference will be held concurrently with the regional summer meeting of the Association of Departments of English.

Plenary Session Speakers: Donald McCloskey, Professor of History and of Economics at University of Iowa and director of the Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry; Anne Ruggles Gere, Professor of English and of Education at the University of Michigan; and Steven Mailloux, Professor of English and of Com-

(NOTICES, Continued on Page 14)

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inside english welcomes articles, reviews, letters, and other writings of interest to instructors of English in two-year colleges. Submissions should be limited to no more than ten double-spaced typed pages. Although a detailed *Policy and Style Sheet* is available on request, in general follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*, *The MLA Style Manual*, and *The NCTE Guide for Non-Sexist Language*. Manuscripts should be accompanied by a cover sheet that includes the author's name, address, and

FROM THE EDITOR

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The other day I received a call from an irate *i.e.* reader. How come, he fumed, *inside english* hadn't alerted him to the problems with IGETC, the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum? Why hadn't the journal written about that horrible "hybrid" critical thinking/composition course that might—he said *would*—sound the death knell for Introduction to Lit courses? He continued to yell into my ear all the reasons community college English

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Send poems to Robert Rippy, *inside english* Poetry Editor, San Bernardino Valley College, 701 So. Mt. Vernon Avenue, San Bernardino, CA 92403. Send all other submissions to Barbara Bilson Woodruff, *inside english* Editor, Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90405.

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FROM THE EDITOR

The other day I received a call from an irate *i.e.* reader. How come, he fumed, *inside english* hadn't alerted him to the problems with IGETC, the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum? Why hadn't the journal written about that horrible "hybrid" critical thinking/composition course that might he said *would* sound the death knell for Introduction to Lit courses? He continued to yell into my ear all the reasons community college English instructors should fight the imposition of this course and save our lit programs. Why, I asked him when he paused for a breath, hadn't *he* written an article addressing the IGETC problem? He sputtered, mumbled something about his time, and hung up.

This conversation—true, I assure you—underscored for me one of the problems we face in publishing *inside english*: Our content depends on the material we receive. Yes, the IGETC requirements have generated a lot of heat in college English departments around the state, but not one of *i.e.*'s readers has written an article or even a letter to the editor addressing the problems.

Over the past few months I have had several phone calls (but no letters to print in *i.e.*) recommending that we review a particular book or that we address a particular problem or that we discuss a particular pedagogy. But these suggestions are rarely followed by articles reviewing that book, addressing that problem, or discussing that pedagogy. Although we now receive more manuscripts each month than the month before, unless we receive one from *you* that voices *your* concerns, those concerns will not be addressed. *You* control the content of *i.e.*; we merely edit and print what you write.

The summer provides for many of us a respite from the rigors of the classroom. If that is true for you, take the time to write an article that expresses your concerns about or your delight in the teaching of English. The October 1992 issue of *inside english* will focus on the politics of teaching English—in and out of the classroom. We hope that this issue will present to the readers a variety of viewpoints on our discipline—its content, its pedagogy, its direction, its dilemmas. What part does state politics play in our daily teaching lives? What about the politics of language—what we say and how we say it? Do students have a right to their own language, or is that a passe concern? Does what we teach in our classes impact our students in a political way? Is literature and writing bias-free? Are we?

In the December 1992 issue we plan to feature creative writing, creative reading, creative teaching. We will publish not only creative writing by community college instructors but also articles that describe techniques for teaching creative writing. In addition, we request manuscripts that review books that inspire you or your students to think creatively or that discuss techniques for teaching creatively.

Let us receive your articles, so that your opinions, attitudes, and ideas can be read by others—not just heard by me in a phone call.

BARBARA BILSON WOODRUFF
Santa Monica College

PRACTICAL HELP WHERE IT'S NEEDED

Preparing Students For Essay Exams: A Strategy

by BRENDA BANKS
Palomar College, Mira Costa College

Why do our students do so poorly on essay exams? I think it is because they have no idea what they are doing.

In English composition courses, students typically write exam essays that ignore the topic question, or they start writing the essay too soon and end up with a garbled and repetitious product, or they find they have nothing at all to say and so fall back on what they know from high school, the dubious art of repeating. Mike Rose describes this common difficulty

> with students who lacked experience writing papers that required them to take an idea carefully apart. They approach the task in terms they can handle, retell the material to you, summarize it, demonstrate that, yes, they can understand the stuff, and here it is. Sometimes it is very hard to get them to see that summary is not adequate, for it had been adequate so many times before [in high school]. (176)

That is, high school has rarely prepared our students to think or write critically, concentrating instead on getting students to repeat what little they have learned on a wide variety of subjects.

Even when I was in college myself, I really did not know how to prepare for and write an essay exam. Occasionally, on the last day of class before an exam, a professor might give a review lecture with opportunities for students to ask questions. But I do not recall being given guidelines on how to study or how to write competent essay answers to exam questions. I usually just read and reread and memorized my course notes the night before the exam. Needless to say, I felt very nervous in the classroom the next day where, once confronted with the question, which always surprised me, I quickly had to figure out a strategy and something to say. I recently came across a final I had taken in Ancient History my first quarter of college. It was marked with a red ink "B" and a brief comment: "Good comprehension of course material, but your essay is too broad, supported with few specific examples." I was shocked and amused, for this sounds like a comment I have written on exams myself, countless times. I believe I generally did better than this on essay exams only because, as an avid reader, I wrote well, not because I really knew what I was doing.

Most of my students in community college have never been avid readers. Only rarely have they written timed essays; in fact, they spend the entire semester in a college composition course drafting and revising essays over two week periods. As nontraditional students, many of them fail to devise even such a rudimentary system as I once did for attacking the essay exam. Not surprisingly, when confronted with an upcoming exam, students grow exceedingly nervous. They hate these exams. They hate the grades they receive on them. And they will never grow more proficient at this essential college task without help. Therefore, I have devised a strategy to assist my students in writing a final essay exam.

THE STRATEGY

I devote the last four days of a semester-long transfer-level composition course to preparation for the final. I do not think this is excessive, as the final usually counts for 30-40 percent of the course grade, and the students freely voice their terror of the final as it approaches. It's on their minds, so why not talk about it? The first day, I pass out a typed set of exam strategies, which are divided into preparing for the exam and writing it. These strategies are aimed not only at our own final exam, which is based upon a single reading, but also at more typical types of essay exams, like those based on a semester's worth of reading and taking notes. I also ask students to contribute any strategies that they have used or heard about. The important points we cover include the following:

1. Do something active to your notes, such as rewriting them or organizing them into categories, rather than just passively rereading them.

2. Guess at possible exam questions based on your notes, and practice writing out responses to these questions.

3. Don't cram on the day of the exam; instead, do something relaxing such as taking a walk or treating yourself to breakfast or lunch out.

4. At the exam, spend five minutes each on freewriting and outlining before you actually begin writing your essay.

On the second day the students take a practice final based on assigned reading from their text, which is also the reading on which the previous semester's final was based. Before the practice exam begins, the students spend about fifteen minutes in groups discussing a summary of the reading and whether

(PREPARING FOR ESSAY EXAMS, Continued on Page 7)

"AS FLIES TO WANTON BOYS"

Imposing *King Lear* in English Composition

215 216

by ROGER ROBIN EKINS

Anthropology Department, I would add that it is even easier achieve something approximating cultural literacy. Success in

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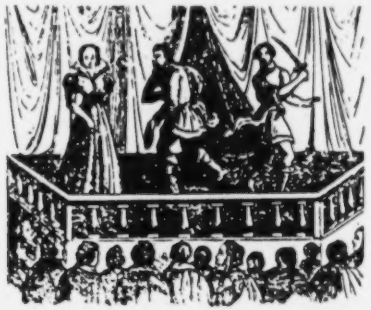
"AS FLIES TO WANTON BOYS"

Imposing *King Lear* in English Composition

by **ROGER ROBIN EKINS**
Butte College

None of us needed E.D. Hirsch, Jr., to tell us that our students don't know what they ought to know. We don't need to administer one of Jaime O'Neill's tests to confirm their collective ignorance of names, places, and phrases most educated people take for granted. But what can be done about it? It's not enough to wag our heads and cluck our tongues; after all, our students are "more sinned against than sinning."

One approach is to seek help from places like the National Endowment for the Humanities. Here at Butte College, we've been thrilled with our NEH grant as it has enabled us to read some great literature and pursue lofty discussion among



our colleagues. It is one of the best things that has happened to us, and I am grateful to Dr. John Osborne of our English Department, who wrote the grant and directed its activities. To date, however, it has not resulted in a single, concrete change in our general education curriculum.

Leon Botstein, President of Bard College, once observed that it is "easier to move a graveyard than to revise the curriculum." Having had personal experience in such through our Anthropology Department, I would add that it is even easier to move a *Native American* graveyard than it is to bring significant change via curricular debate, described by Botstein as "the imposition of one generation's sense of crisis upon the next." So what do we do while the corpses are being slowly exhumed and our generation's particular crisis crawls toward definition?

Something I learned a long time ago—and something I am periodically forced to rediscover—is that the most significant changes in the curriculum are not instigated at the dean's level, but take place in the individual classroom. For that reason, among others, this dean insists on teaching at least one class each year. So rather than wait for some kind of collective vision to emerge from the humanities faculty at Butte College—something I still look forward to, by the way—I decided to make significant change in the one thing I have complete control over: my own Freshman Composition class.

Here in my domain I can do what I think is right—and I think it is right to teach *King Lear* in a composition class. I require my students to read *King Lear* for two primary reasons. The first—and undoubtedly most significant—is that I read *Lear* as a freshman and fell hopelessly in love with it. Isn't part of what makes teaching so rewarding the opportunity to pass on one's passions to others? And why am I so passionate about this particular play? Where else can one find such rich, intermingled themes as the question of divine justice, the problem of filial responsibility, the vulnerability of good to evil? Where else can one find such wonderfully extended metaphors as "nature," "sight," and "madness"? No wonder many consider *Lear* to be the greatest tragedy written in the English language.

The second reason for imposing *King Lear* upon my skeptical and fearstruck students is that as much as I regret **The List** Hirsch felt compelled to construct, I am firmly persuaded by his argument that we owe it to our students to help them achieve something approximating cultural literacy. Success in our culture is hard to come by without such "background knowledge." "Oh," one might object, "but hardly anyone reads Shakespeare today." That may be true, unfortunately, but his legacy is all around us. I offer two recent examples:

The first is not taken from the back pages of some obscure, intellectual journal, but from a central source of popular culture—the funny pages of virtually everyone's local newspaper. In one of my favorite "Peanuts" cartoons we find the very crabby Lucy yelling, "Everything's wrong! I don't know how I put up with it! And it's getting worse! It's getting worse all the time!" Schroeder, philosophical and sexist as ever, gazes into the heavens and sarcastically quotes, "Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low . . . an excellent thing in woman." Lucy, along—I suspect—with most Americans, simply responds with "What'd he say?"

The second example, which appeared just prior to election day in 1990, comes from an editorial column by George Will in which he discusses the campaign of John Silber, the abrasive President of Boston University, in his bid for the governorship of Massachusetts. Apparently Silber had been accused of advocating "genocide" when people *thought* they heard him argue that the elderly should get on with dying so goverment can get on with balancing the budget. Will is quick to point out that Silber, in fact, said no such thing. What Silber did say was this: "Shakespeare was right when he said 'Ripeness is all.' When you've had a long life and you're ripe, *then* it's time to go" (4E; emphasis mine). Had Silber's critics enjoyed even a casual acquaintance with *King Lear* they could never have interpreted Edgar's comments as an advocacy for genocide. On the contrary, he made his "ripeness is all" speech in a successful effort to dissuade his blinded father, Gloucester, from giving up on life. Perhaps I am straining things too far, but

(IMPOSING KING LEAR, *Continued on Page 10)*

EMPOWERING STUDENTS

(Continued from Page 1)

three-quarters are employed, and a quarter work full-time.

Many of our most dedicated, most successful students were not great successes in high school. These students did not thrive when they were educated with the banking method. Most learn best when they involve as many of their five senses as possible in the learning process. They learn best when they recreate information and skills for themselves by actually using them.

These older students are not fresh out of high school. They've been around the block. Most hold jobs. Many raise families. More than a few have struggled with problems that go beyond the experience of many of their instructors: They have endured beatings, battled alcohol and other drugs, or fought in wars. They may be academically naive, but they are sophisticated in their experiences. From this wealth of experience, they can bring insight to their reading, themselves, their classmates, and even their instructors.

There are, in summary, several reasons why the banking method is not the most effective way to teach our students:

1. Knowledge is changing too fast for memorized information to be adequate. Students must learn to discover and evaluate ideas, not simply to parrot them. Students must learn to become their own authorities.

2. Many of our students are not traditional learners. In fact, most of us benefit by involving as many of our five senses as possible in the learning process.

3. Our students do not come to us as empty bank accounts. These are adult students with adult experiences and adult stakes in the learning process.

were studying—Melville or deconstruction or whatever—but at that moment I realized that there were actually three things I was more focused on: a) showing the students how smart I was; b) showing them how knowedgeable I was; and c) showing them how well prepared I was for class. I had been putting on a performance whose true goal was not to help the students learn but to act in such a way that they would have a good opinion of me. More than anything else, this is what we teach our students: how to perform within an institutional academic setting so that they will be thought of highly by their colleagues and instructors. (654)

Charlene Delfino, speaking at the 1990 Young Rhetoricians' Conference, put it this way: we teach the box step to students trying to learn the dance. It gives them something to do on the dance floor, but she doesn't think we can call it dancing.

Delfino equated the box step with the five-paragraph essay. It can also be equated with the traditional method of teaching: for example, a literature classroom dominated by the authority-figure instructor who tells students what to think about a work of literature. This may be the box step, but I don't think we can call it a meaningful way to approach learning for a lifetime.

In a literature class—for example, the beleaguered English 1B—we can teach only a small fraction of the canon—if we can decide what the canon is. What we can do instead of lecturing to our students, instead of teaching students that the way to knowledge is to dutifully note our words of wisdom, is to help students gain expertise and confidence in their own ability to find/construct/evaluate meaning.

Similarly in a composition classroom, if we remain the sole audience for writing, if Olympus—to mix some mythologies. Rather, these goals evolved as I have struggled to meet the changing needs of a changing student population in our changing world. Because goals differ for different classes, I will use my English 201 class (the semester before transfer-level composition) as an example of specific methodology.

THE OBJECTIVES

In the first class, I ask students to write about their own goals for the semester. This request shocks some and puzzles others. It hadn't occurred to many students that they should have their own goals; goals, they have always assumed, were something im-

posed by instructors on students, not something students actually created for themselves. For the second class, I put some of the student goals on a transparency for discussion. Certainly their ideas bring insight to me as well as to their classmates. Next, I share my goals with them, and we discuss similarities and differences.

English 201 Goals

1. to work collaboratively to acquire experience problem-solving with others

2. to experience the responsibility of selecting and interpreting material for others

3. to practice finding unifying ideas and the support for those ideas

4. to determine whether or not that support will contain for a particular week, right now you need to select a week. When the issue for your week arrives, your group must do the following:

1. Look through the articles. Select two or three articles that include approximately four solid pages of printed text. (Pictures don't count.) Write journal entries totaling 250 words explaining why you have selected these articles for the class to read.

2. Meet with the rest of your group and discuss your reasons for selecting the articles you want the class to read.

3. Come to an agreement with group members about which articles your classmates should read.

4. Decide which group member is responsible for which part of the presentation.

5. Plan your presentation to your classmates so that group members have equal time front and center in class.

6. Find the central point of each article. Write that central point on a transparency.

7. Find the supporting details that attempt to prove the central point. List these supporting details on a transparency.

8. Point out any places where you were confused by the article. Put these sections on a transparency for discussion with your classmates during your report.

9. Explain to the class why you think the article did or did not support its point. Yes, you may disagree with group members. The important thing is to explain why you think the article did or did not support its point.

EVALUATING PRESENTATIONS

How does one evaluate student presentations? I give students written comments on their report and a "Credit" grade. Since students are nervous, I make my comments as positive as possible, though I do include constructive suggestions for improvement. In addition, I assign students

memorized information to be adequate. Students must learn to discover and evaluate ideas, not simply to parrot them. Students must learn to become their own authorities.

2. Many of our students are not traditional learners. In fact, most of us benefit by involving as many of our five senses as possible in the learning process.

3. Our students do not come to us as empty bank accounts. These are adult students with adult experiences and adult stakes in the learning process.

How does involving students in the learning process benefit both instructors and students? Some of us are old dogs. We have file folders filled with nifty lecture notes replete with wisdom. Jane Tompkins tells us why such instructors and their students benefit from turning over class time to students. In "Pedagogy of the Distressed" Tompkins reminisces:

> I remember walking to class down an empty hall and thinking to myself, "I should find out what my students want, what they need, and not worry about whether what I've prepared is good enough or ever gets said at all." Up until that day I had always thought that what I was doing was helping my students to understand the material we

[illegible] think we can call it a meaningful way to approach learning for a lifetime.

In a literature class—for example, the beleaguered English 1B—we can teach only a small fraction of the canon—if we can decide what the canon is. What we can do instead of lecturing to our students, instead of teaching students that the way to knowledge is to dutifully note our words of wisdom, is to help students gain expertise and confidence in their own ability to find/construct/evaluate meaning.

Similarly in a composition classroom, if we remain the sole audience for writing, if we remain the sole source of feedback to student authors, then students might not learn that crucial step of criticizing their own writing. As Kathleen Dudden Andrasick put it in *Opening Texts*:

> Students need constant practice to develop into capable, functioning adults in a verbally complex society. In a literature classroom, this means practice in approaching language (a literary text) through language (their own talking and writing). It means practice in generating, testing, and presenting critical observations to a real audience. (7)

INVOLVING STUDENTS

How can we involve our students in the learning-teaching process? If all of you bank accounts out there are ready, I'll begin to make some deposits concerning how to get our students more involved in their education.

The first step is to decide what it is we want students to accomplish. This goal-setting activity is a good example of my contention that we have a continuing need to problem-solve and think critically as we face new problems in life. Certainly in my own formal education in the '60s, I did not learn how to set goals for my current student. Nor were the goals I'm about to share with you inscribed on a stone tablet I found in a burning bush as Athena and I were hiking around Mount

For the second class, I put some of the student goals on a transparency for discussion. Certainly their ideas bring insight to me as well as to their classmates. Next, I share my goals with them, and we discuss similarities and differences.

English 201 Goals

1. to work collaboratively to acquire experience problem-solving with others

2. to experience the responsibility of selecting and interpreting material for others

3. to practice finding unifying ideas and the support for those ideas

4. to determine whether or not that support is compelling

5. to learn first hand about audience and audience response

6. to gain self-confidence that comes from meeting a scary situation—the Outward Bound philosophy of instruction

7. to get me off center stage and put students on stage intellectually as well as physically

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND GROUP PRESENTATIONS

One of the ways I get students involved in their own learning is to have them take charge of selecting and discussing articles from *Time*. I assign the first set of articles to help model how to do the reports and to give students time to feel more at home with their classmates before they find themselves front and center. Students select which week of the semester they wish to do their report. The first students to sign up get the first choice of times; the last students get the last choice. When I announce this assignment, I give students the following guidelines:

The Guidelines: Your Report, Your Group, and Your Classmates

Working with two or three classmates, you are responsible for assigning the class to read two articles in an issue of *Time*. Since we cannot currently know what articles *Time* classmates during your report.

9. Explain to the class why you think the article did or did not support its point. Yes, you may disagree with group members. The important thing is to explain why you think the article did or did not support its point.

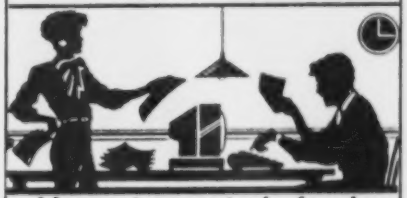
EVALUATING PRESENTATIONS

How does one evaluate student presentations? I give students written comments on their report and a "Credit" grade. Since students are nervous, I make my comments as positive as possible, though I do include constructive suggestions for improvement. In addition, I assign students to write responses to the following questions, which I read and then present to the group:

1. Did the group plan their presentations so that group members had equal time front and center in class?

(EMPOWERING STUDENTS, Continued on Page 6)

inside english DEADLINES



Manuscripts received after the deadline for a given issue will be considered for the next appropriate issue.

OCTOBER 1992 issue
Politics and Teaching English, in and out of the Classroom
1 August 1992

DECEMBER 1992 issue
Creative Writing, Creative Reading, Creative Teaching
10 October 1992

SALVAGE OPERATIONS AND MIRACULOUS RECOVERIES

Dealing With Problem Classes

by JAMES PIPER
Fresno City College

Now and then, like all of you, I draw a "bad" class, one with a problem serious enough to interfere with normal teaching and learning. I place "bad" in quotes because I no longer believe there are such things as bad classes, though the term comes easily to us, as easily as "good" class. Both are fictions. We ought to stop looking at classes this way. We'd teach better, and we'd feel better about what we do, too.

Our tendency, I believe, is to give up on classes we find impervious, impertinent, or merely stupid. Why not? It's not our fault we were dealt such hopelessness. Besides, it's only a matter of weeks before the damnable class is out of our lives. Why waste energy?

We incline also to *dislike* such classes, just as we naturally *like* our better, more willing class—or classes we perceive as such. But as professionals we really do not have the choice to give up or dislike. Instead, as professionals we ought to commence salvage operations on problem classes, and we should also expect miraculous recoveries. The former is always possible; the latter we sometimes coax out by mentally positioning ourselves so that when the magic strikes, both we and our students will be ready.

Almost always, when we label a class as "good" or "bad," we react to a small number of students, three or four, who impinge on us disproportionately. We ignore a large, grey, middle range of students, neither good nor bad, who inevitably inhabit any class.

Moreover, we usually ignore our own active role in determining what we believe to be the essence of a class. It's a circular, self-reinforcing process. Come in grouchy or stressed, the class will pick that up and with-

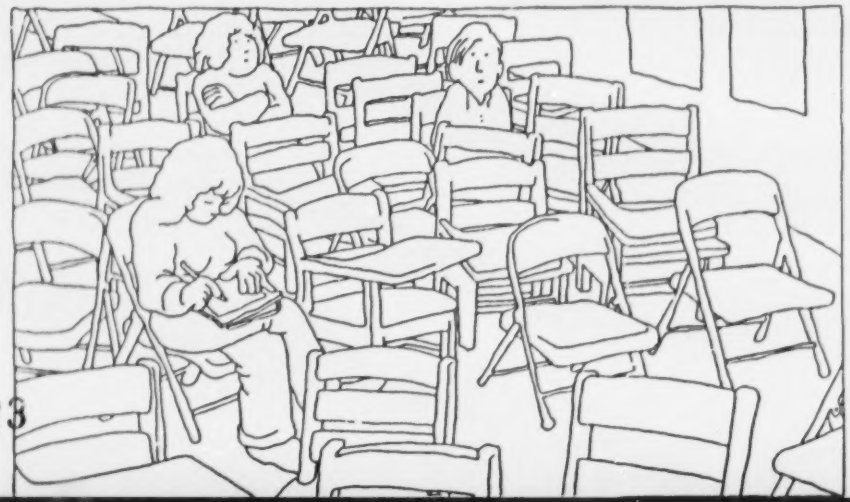
him! The other drowsies quite possibly had been junk-food flabby types who lunched-out on burritos. I had allowed this handful of zombies to pollute my feelings about the entire class.

Meanwhile, I had excluded from my consciousness certain alert students—they float back to me now—like bright-eyed, upright Dori, who revised and revised and revised for me. In the same way I had failed to pay attention to a young man named Adam who held back and said nothing aloud in class or to me but who never missed class and wrote twice as much as I assigned. He wrote very well, too, obviously enjoying himself. And Angie, the eager young Latina with three children who was determined to get through college—I blocked her out too. Nothing phlegmatic about these students, yet I had not paid attention to them.

Then there was that class that seemed overpopulated by outright "troublemakers"—or so I labeled them. On the first day of class a student rudely accused me of being unfair a monster. I reacted negatively, defensively. This in turn created a hostile, distrustful atmosphere in the classroom, which students then picked up to become hostile and distrustful right back at me. What I had missed was that the class certainly had the normal run of unremarkable students, neither compliant nor rebellious, and I had been insensitive to them.

I first had a chance to consciously salvage a problem class about two years ago when I taught a "bad" lit class for nontransfer students. I could not get this class to say anything. For a time I imagined they actually enjoyed sitting there and letting me die, day after day.

The students in this reticent class were starting to rouse my anger when, during the fourth week, I somehow found my way back to my professional origins. I said, "No, I won't let them get to me. I refuse to become cynical. I'm going to find a way. I'm a professional." So I decided to use the technique of small-group discussion and see if it didn't free up some brains and tongues.



and I think of something I can do, some alteration of technique, some twist, that might address the problem. I do a third thing, too: I never lower my standards.

When you undertake a salvage operation, you can't expect to repair everything. You probably shouldn't expect miracles, although they do happen, as I shall come to. Instead, you focus on fixing the one "bad" thing. You bang away at that bent axle and straighten it so the class doesn't veer hopelessly as it used to. But you have to understand that the class will still bump and rattle a little. It works but imperfectly. It's better than it was before, and that is the point.

Now let me tell you about a miraculous recovery that took place in a class from hell I taught not long ago *after* professional salvaging, when necessary, became a routine part of my teaching. Everything about this particular class was "bad": Students were insolent, noisy, and not very competent. For a time, I didn't want to teach them. For a time, I didn't think I could.

However, in a matter of just a few weeks I regained my composure and vowed to stay positive. I was always on the verge of losing my patience, often tempted to harangue and chide that class. But when I felt this way I worked baby steps and tried to get back to a posture of professionalism.

Attendance was terrible. Papers came in late. Students rebelled, questioned the worth of assignments. I'd say, "If you'd only come to class, you wouldn't be so confused." My griping only made them insolent. They'd say, "Yeah, well, this class is interfering with my life. Cut me some slack."

During all this, I was merciless in applying policy. Two tardies equal one absence; seven absences, you are history. Turn in a writing assignment late, take a one-grade hit. Students knew all about this from day one.

This was a single-purpose class: preparing students to pass a departmentally-administered written exit test. At midterm I lost over

also expect miraculous recoveries. The former is always possible; the latter we sometimes coax out by mentally positioning ourselves so that when the magic strikes, both we and our students will be ready.

Almost always, when we label a class as "good" or "bad," we react to a small number of students, three or four, who impinge on us disproportionately. We ignore a large, grey, middle range of students, neither good nor bad, who inevitably inhabit any class.

Moreover, we usually ignore our own active role in determining what we believe to be the essence of a class. It's a circular, self-reinforcing process. Come in grouchy or stressed, the class will pick that up and withdraw from you. Come in ebullient, the class will sparkle right back at you.

For example, I once gave up on a class I believed to be stupefyingly, contagiously lethargic. It was an after-lunch class that, I felt, was always out to lunch and would nearly put me to sleep on my feet. As I'd be teaching and see them out there nodding and drooping, I'd find myself wanting to lie down on the floor and go to sleep. I think if I had done this, no one would have noticed. We all would have just slept the period away.

I could not teach this class much nor use the normal range of teaching techniques. If I lectured, they'd just go comatose. Class discussion was difficult because the few students who did bother to contribute did so in such weak voices that nobody could hear them. They lacked the force to make their words travel in the air from one end of the room to the other.

I just put my time in. I lost that class.

I know now I might have salvaged that class by resisting the tendency to label and by gaining some perspective on what the class as a whole was really like. Specifically, I might have considered, as I do now, that only four or five students had actually been afflicted with drowsiness. One, I recall, was especially rankling to me. He'd plop down right before me, front and center, and instantly go to sleep. At my very feet. Every day. O how I disliked

about my seven-cuts-and-you're-out attendance policy. The first day of class! How impertinent!

A few weeks later another student turned me in to the dean because I lost a paper of hers. Sure, I lose maybe one or two papers a year, and when I do I apologize and cut whatever deal the student wants to make. This particular student still retained a draft of her paper. I read it and graded it—overgraded it, in fact. And still she turned me in. Perverse!

Four of them united, assaulted my office, and said I was putting restrictions on them by assigning a research paper based on a problem and its solution. I said, "That's right—research is all about restrictions. But you ought to rejoice that I am allowing you to select both the problem and the solution."

"Rejoice, hell," they said. "We don't like restrictions."

All this perceived petulance threw me off. I'm only human. I dreaded meeting that class. I lost it.

What could I have done? Step one: Junk the label *troublemakers*. Statistically that class had probably contained only two or three more querulous students than any other class. I had overreacted to them and mentally jettisoned the rest of the class. Also, the label I hauled into class every day had made me

I had employed this technique before, of course, but not as a salvage measure. I'd used it more as a change of pace, for variety. This time it worked moderately well. I arranged the class into groups of four, gave each group something to discuss, and later had the groups report to the entire class. Through this expediency I managed to get at least one student from each group to contribute, if only briefly. In several groups, two or three students finally said something after a little prodding from me. None of them said very much, but the period was a turnaround in a different way. A positive, more sociable mood settled on the class. Students now were more willing. They ceased resisting me. It wasn't me vs. them; it was all of us wanting to know more about the poem or story we were studying.

I, too, changed during that restorative hour. Instead of the usual defensive, negative, thin-skinned teacher I had been with that class, I found myself becoming friendlier and more helpful. I listened carefully to what students said. I nodded, acknowledged, confirmed whenever I could, without patronizing.

That was my first salvage operation. I've had a few others since then. In fact, I look forward to them now. Whenever I draw a class with some problem or deficiency, I go into a salvage mode. I do two things: I make it a point to stay cheerful, respectful, and helpful, to a posture of professionalism.

Attendance was terrible. Papers came in late. Students rebelled, questioned the worth of assignments. I'd say, "If you'd only come to class, you wouldn't be so confused." My griping only made them insolent. They'd say, "Yeah, well, this class is interfering with my life. Cut me some slack."

During all this, I was merciless in applying policy. Two tardies equal one absence; seven absences, you are history. Turn in a writing assignment late, take a one-grade hit. Students knew all about this from day one.

This was a single-purpose class: preparing students to pass a departmentally-administered written exit test. At midterm I lost over a third of the class, a higher-than-usual proportion. Half of these dropped, I supposed, because they had passed the midterm exit test and didn't need me any more; the other half failed the midterm and slipped into a black hole somewhere, never to be heard from again. Thus a rump class of about twenty students survived.

I didn't have to put salvage schemes into motion with this class, although I was ready to. Instead, the miracle happened. The class underwent a total transformation and became one of the most enjoyable, most willing groups of students I have ever taught. Spontaneously, they became curious, curious, curious. They wanted me to differentiate between semicolons, dashes, and colons. They wanted to know about alternatives to MLA format. I seldom encountered this level of curiosity in the Freshman Comp courses I taught. Most important, their writing got better and better.

I take this turnaround as my reward for having stayed positive and professional. Throughout that dark first half, I hadn't given anything away, nor had they succeeded in prodding me into expressions of hostility. We were both in a good position for the miracle to happen.

I am in the middle of a minor miracle even as I write. It is happening in a film study class I am teaching. The class is very,

(PROBLEM CLASSES, Continued on Page 9)

SERVING "AT RISK" STUDENTS

Humanizing the Curriculum and the Classroom

by JOHN F. GARDENHIRE
Laney College

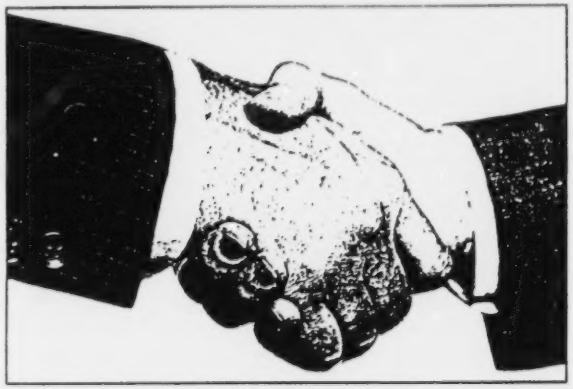
Several years ago I became aware of the need for action on Laney's retention front, when it became clear that we were losing an inordinate number of African-American students who had ability and skills. Some of those students were "at risk," but many were not. Yet, too many of them just disappeared without bothering to drop officially.

At the same time nobody here was addressing the problem, so I decided to attack it in my classroom. In so doing, I developed the plan that I present below, which is based on the philosophy of an experimental program that we had on our campus some years before. Its success, however, was its undoing—but this is not the place to discuss the politics of that. What is relevant is that the concept of the experimental program was a good one for the students it served: "at risk" African-American males.

The program focused on "humanizing" the curriculum. The effectiveness of the Experimental College can still be shown by looking at the statistics for any semester during its tenure. For example, the 1971 Spring Semester found 250 students enrolled; 241 of those students finished the semester. The ideas of that program can be incorporated into the plans of any instructor. Let me encourage you to begin now to try these ideas. They will work for both you and your "at risk" students.

THE PLAN

Traditionally, instructors work alone in the space of the classroom in the struggle to share information in ways that students will learn it. The key word here is "alone." In the face of modern demands requiring a multicultural work force by the next century, it is paramount that the isolation of teacher and student no longer be the model for teaching any students, especially the "at risk" student. We need trained, skilled African-Americans in the work force. Thus, the institutions of higher learning must focus on new ways to serve all "at risk" students, the African-American male, in particular. Should we find the formula that works for these students, we will have found the formula to serve all students well. The kinds of experiences that enrich "at risk" students are the kinds of experiences that enrich all students.



Research shows that the ideal retention programs are institutionally-based, campus wide, highly structured affairs. Why aren't there more successful programs as models on more campuses? Is there a leadership vacuum? Yet even without strong leadership, many effective things can be done to enhance student retention. For whatever the cause of the paucity of programs, the retention problem falls on individual instructors, who must address and solve it. If not the classroom instructor, who will help students stay through their courses?

Instructors are the answer for many reasons. First, they are the closest to the problem. Second, it is easy for them to start a specific program because they have the autonomy to try new ideas by virtue of the door on their classrooms. When that door is closed, the instructor can try new techniques at will. Third, instructors bring special qualities to the task: energy, firmness, fairness, openness, warmth, charm, and the creativity that is needed to make a retention program work. A teacher's willingness to take a chance helps here, too.

By developing a plan that they think will work with their students and by deciding to implement that plan, instructors, even alone, can foster retention of their "at risk" students.

TECHNIQUES

Techniques that any instructor can use to foster student retention include those that I list here. I shall briefly discuss each item to clarify its use and purpose. Having used these techniques with my students for years, I know they work. They can and should be applied at once, beginning the first day of class. Implementing them is not as formidable as it might appear.

1. LEARN THE STUDENTS' NAMES. This might seem obvious to an experienced instructor, but it needs to be said again. Call students by their names when referring to them, especially when referring to African-American males. If you can, memorize their names on the first day; if not, learn the names as quickly as possible. Issues of self-worth, specialness, and identity are addressed in a positive way by your utilizing this first technique.

2. ASSIGN SPECIFIC OFFICE HOUR VISITS. These should be held during the first two weeks of the semester. I know that this takes a lot of time during the first weeks, but the payoff is wonderful in its effect upon retention. At the beginning of each visit, I always ask students a question that allows them to bring up issues that concern them. Frequently, I am told information and facts that they would not tell their parents or best friends about health or drug problems,

(HUMANIZING CLASSES, Continued on Page 16)

225

EMPOWERING STUDENTS

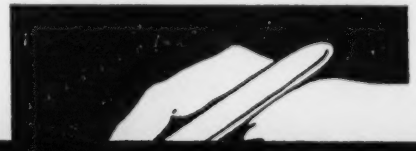
(Continued from Page 4) 227

2. Did the group find the central point of each article and write that central point

and fun for students) is the videotape. Students love seeing themselves and their classmates on television, and the tape helps them to see themselves as others saw them.

I must add here that peer pressure is power-

Nevertheless, even while I am making my intellectual deposits, I strive to involve students. Instead of simply lecturing them, I try to play the Socratic gadfly. Certainly I could get more deposits in their brains in an hour



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(HUMANIZING CLASSES, Continued on Page 16)

EMPOWERING STUDENTS

(Continued from Page 4)

2. Did the group find the central point of each article and write that central point on a transparency? In your response, include what the central point was.

3. Did the group list the supporting details that attempt to prove the central point? List these supporting details.

4. Point out any places where you were confused by the presentation.

5. Did the group explain to the class why they thought the article did or did not support its point? Explain why you agreed or disagreed with group members.

6. What did the group do to involve the rest of the class in the report?

One of the most powerful and entertaining evaluating tools (and perhaps the most painful and fun for students) is the videotape. Students love seeing themselves and their classmates on television, and the tape helps them to see themselves as others saw them.

I must add here that peer pressure is powerful. In fact, I have found it to be more potent than the threat represented by a potential grade. No one so far has failed to meet a deadline. No one has failed to give a report.

EMPOWERING STUDENTS

Herman Melville wrote: "There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true method." Helping students to take responsibility for their own learning is one of those enterprises. In *Embracing Contraries* Peter Elbow contends:

> Much teaching behavior stems from an unwarranted fear of things falling apart . . . . But the unnamed disaster somehow doesn't happen. There is some confusion, desultoriness, and recurring silence, but the new class texture has an organic structure and stability. (71-72)

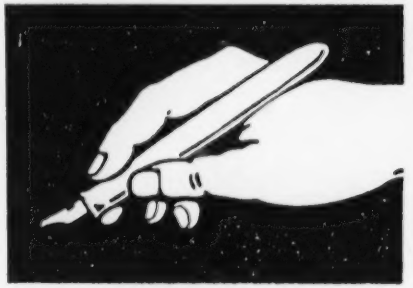
This structure and stability comes from genuine involvement of students in the learning process, an involvement that will help students to incorporate their academic work into the rest of their lives.

However, turning class time over to students does not mean turning over control of the entire learning process. There is a delicate balance between anarchy and empowering students. I begin each unit in a class by doing some "banking concept" instruction. Nevertheless, even while I am making my intellectual deposits, I strive to involve students. Instead of simply lecturing them, I try to play the Socratic gadfly. Certainly I could get more deposits in their brains in an hour of lecturing. But how much of those deposits would stay put and how much would leak out?

Jane Tompkins assesses the success of her student-centered learning:

> I find that my classes are better. The students have more to say in every class, more students take part in the discussion, students talk more to one another and less to me, and the intensity and quality of their engagement with the course materials is deeper than usual . . . .
>
> Still, there is the question of whether, in shifting the burden of performance onto the students, I'm making them do work I'm too lazy to do myself, sending them off on a journey with inadequate supplies. It's true that in some cases the students don't deal with the material as well as I could, but that is exactly why they need to do it. It's not important for me to polish my skills, but they do need to develop theirs and to find a voice. (657)

Gabriele Rico wrote: "We might well remember that the Latin *educare* still means 'to draw out,' never 'to pound in'" (23). In a traditional instructor-centered classroom, students look to the instructor for the Truth. In our rapidly changing world, students must find that Truth themselves.



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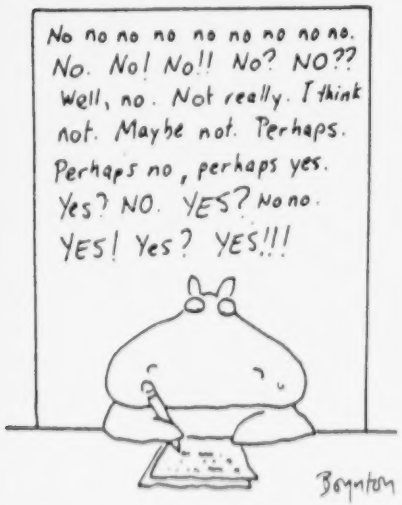
*She has published numerous articles and two composition texts—*Practicing the Process: A Basic Text *(Scott, Foresman) and* Review and Revise *(McGraw-Hill) and will have a freshman composition rhetoric published by McGraw-Hill in the fall. In addition, she is currently working on a mystery novel whose protagonist teaches English at Central Coast Community College.*

PREPARING FOR ESSAY EXAMS

(Continued from Page 3)

or not they agree with its argument. I give the students a writing prompt with the same format and the same general instructions as the real final prompt. Only the topic question itself differs. I read their responses, make suggestions for revision, and return them the next day.

We begin class on day three by looking at some of the finals that my previous semester's students wrote on the same reading. I usually choose one weak and one strong final, xeroxed as it is but with the names removed, without indicating which is which. In their


No no no no no no no no no.
No. No! No!! No? NO??
Well, no. Not really. I think not. Maybe not. Perhaps.
Perhaps no, perhaps yes.
Yes? NO. YES? No no.
YES! Yes? YES!!!
Boynton

groups the students read these exams and discuss which is stronger and why. Then each student writes a brief end comment with a grade on the final as a teacher would. We discuss these evaluations, then tally the students' grades and compare them with mine—we're usually very close—and I put on the board a list, generated by my students, of the qualities distinguishing the strong final essay. I return the practice finals, and the students spend the rest of the class revising the essay by querying it and to review the kinds of skills that I have focused on during the semester.

Each group writes down one question, which I take to another group. The groups then read their assigned questions aloud and engage in five minutes of freewriting in search of a response. Next, I ask them to construct a brief outline of a response, also for about five minutes. I encourage them to share their outlines within their groups to see the variety of ways to attack the question. Lastly, for about ten minutes they each write out either an introductory paragraph or a first body paragraph. These are then returned to the group that formulated the question, whose members now read and evaluate together the responses they've received. In discussion with the whole class, students remark upon these responses. Someone usually points to a response that ignored the question, which gives me the opportunity to discuss how to word a question clearly to get the kind of response you want and how important it is to answer the question directly, even repeating some of its key words to show that you are paying attention. As they leave, I encourage the students to continue discussing the assigned essay among themselves and writing about it before the day of the final.

This past semester I received some fabulous responses from students to my final exam question on Didion's essay. I wrote:

> In the preface to the collection of essays from which this essay comes, Joan Didion tells us that she wrote these pieces while suffering from a pervasive sense that "things" were falling apart, both in her mind and in the world around her. The act of writing seems to provide Didion with a method to stop or at least to delay this process of falling apart, a way to control herself and her environment.
>
> Write an essay in which you analyze what exactly is falling apart in "Some suffering that the author, Joan Didion, herself experienced at the time of this essay's writing. Her descriptions of the harsh land, the greed of the new California, and the plight of those arriving here with grandiose dreams and expectations are revealed with such emotion and intricate detail that one is forced to travel to this land and suffer the disappointment with Didion and her characters while reading this essay. Didion lives this story of broken dreams and wasted lives and yet tries desperately to detach herself from these predicaments by presenting Lucille Miller's case from the view of an unrelated third party and by stressing that people are the products of their environments."
>
> * * *
>
> "The future always looks good in the golden land, because no one remembers the past." Joan Didion wrote this as she felt her life was falling apart around her, just as Lucille Miller's life and hopes did fall apart. Lucille Miller had a husband that lacked status, money, and "the good life"; her affair with the well-known attorney was over; the murder of her husband had not gone as planned; and she now found herself in prison with nothing at all. Many people came to the San Bernardino Valley looking to rise above their past; Lucille Miller wanted it so badly, she murdered her husband for the "Golden Dream."

I know that these students will go into future courses feeling better equipped to approach the essay exam than they did before, for they have become critical thinkers. We must not simply assume that our students know how to study for or write these kinds of exams, nor should we allow them to discover only through trial and error the appropriate strategies for this essential college task.

THE SILVER TONE

and then I came upon what it was I was
going to buy:
a single bar of silver
and a short mallet with a round black ball
lying beside it.

My wife babysits my grandson without me,
cuddling him in her arms.

I wonder why I have always felt like a
bridge,
between two wars,
two styles of teaching,
two generations.

I see the two of us—my father and me—
sitting at twilight,
looking toward the green hills,
a plane high above,
heading toward the distant airport.

Even today, I always seem to look behind
me.
They left me too soon.
They died on me (my mother when I was
in fourth grade;
my father when I was in third year high
school,
and I had just finished my physics exam).

That one tone,
when I struck the silver bar with the mallet,
one long pure tone
e x t e n d e d
tapering in time.

that's it! that tone, the wind chimes at home,
the pennies I pick up,
the grandson that smiles like the sun,
the cloth turtle he plays with—
they are all one!

So it was important at Ojai
to enter the Heart of Light Bookstore with
Herb and Violette
to explore the heart of light
and to take with me
not a book,

groups the students read these exams and discuss which is stronger and why. Then each student writes a brief end comment with a grade on the final as a teacher would. We discuss these evaluations, then tally the students' grades and compare them with mine—we're usually very close—and I put on the board a list, generated by my students, of the qualities distinguishing the strong final essay. I return the practice finals, and the students spend the rest of the class revising these and sharing them with classmates for comment. I want students to understand that the essay exam needn't be so different from the out-of-class essays they've been writing all semester: they can still draft and revise even in the limited amount of time allotted.

On the fourth and last day before the exam, the students arrive in class having already read the assigned reading. Last semester I chose Joan Didion's "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" from *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, a largely narrative essay describing a murder investigation in 1960's San Bernardino, which ended in the conviction of one Lucille Miller in the murder of her husband. Titillating as the story itself is, Didion's essay also offers insightful reflection upon the hopes and delusions of those who seek the better life in Southern California, where my students also live. In groups once again—as I will not answer questions or offer comments upon this essay—my students discuss the point of Didion's piece and then devise possible questions for the essay exam. I tell them to think about my teaching during the entire semester as they do this: What kinds of writing questions have I given? What skills have I stressed? I have already written the exam question so as not to be influenced by their guesses. The point, I tell my students, is not necessarily to read my mind and guess correctly, but to start thinking critically about

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>
> Write an essay in which you analyze what exactly is falling apart in "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream," and discuss how Didion's meditations upon the case of Lucille Miller help to restore order to the chaos. Base your argument solidly upon evidence from Didion's essay, but be sure to provide more than just a summary of what she has to say.

The students' responses demonstrated an ability to plan what they would say, to attack the question with purpose and self confidence, and to offer insightful analysis rather than just repetition of what they had read. I'll close with samples from two of the best:

> "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" is a story of false hope, foolish love, and broken dreams. It is a story of suffering, perhaps, a similar kind of in prison with nothing at all. Many people came to the San Bernardino Valley looking to rise above their past; Lucille Miller wanted it so badly, she murdered her husband for the "Golden Dream."

I know that these students will go into future courses feeling better equipped to approach the essay exam than they did before, for they have become critical thinkers. We must not simply assume that our students know how to study for or write these kinds of exams, nor should we allow them to discover only through trial and error the appropriate strategies for this essential college task.

MY FAVORITE ACTIVITY
My favorite activity is to swim.
swimming is fun in a pool or in the ocean. In winter,
when the water is cold outside, I like to go to an
indoor pool to swim.
Indoor pool is a long drive away, so I am
unfortunately, the
not able to go swimming as often
as in summer.
ENGFISH
Boynton

On my own, I had finally figured out a method for writing outstanding essay exams and actually enjoying myself while doing so, but it took me no fewer than eight years of college to reach this point. Most of our students don't have that much time.

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Brenda Banks has taught both composition and literature at Palomar College and Mira Costa College. She recently completed her Ph.D. in English at UCLA and is presently working on developing articles from her dissertation on William Wordsworth.

when I struck the silver bar with the mallet,
one long pure tone
e x t e n d e d
tapering in time.

that's it! that tone, the wind chimes at home,
the pennies I pick up,
the grandson that smiles like the sun,
the cloth turtle he plays with—
they are all one!

So it was important at Ojai
to enter the Heart of Light Bookstore with
Herb and Violette
to explore the heart of light
and to take with me
not a book,
not a crystal,
an incense twig,
iron balls,
or rich sounding wind chimes,
but a single note of music,
the heart of light.

And it surely is all one:
the bar,
the mallet,
the glider swing my father and I sat in
he would have loved *his* grandson—
the hills,
the plane,
being the bridge,
and teaching,
my wife holding my grandson warmly,
the circle of sound,
the single tone,
making a heart,
a heart of light,
and bringing peace,

peace,

peace.

WALTER J. DUDEK
Fullerton College

Walter Dudek has been teaching at Fullerton College for the past twenty-six years. In addition to his usual duties of teaching Preparation for College Writing and College Writing Classes, he teaches (or has taught) a variety of literature classes, including Introduction to Literature, World Literature, and the Bible as Literature.

REviews

A GOOD BEGINNING

by ROBIN L. JEFFERS
Don Bosco Technical Institute

There aren't that many books around to use in our teacher training courses. Fortunately, Irvin I. Hashimoto's *Thirteen Weeks: A Guide to Teaching College Writing* makes it a lot less important that more be written. He's clearly a good teacher, and as he explains in the course of the book, he's done his share of experimenting, so he knows what works, what doesn't, and why it doesn't. On top of that, his book is an easy, entertaining read. Its layout comes as close to the little information bites of *Time* magazine as a scholarly book can, and the book is all the more accessible for it.

According to the blurb on the back cover, *Thirteen Weeks* (so-called because once the holidays, the first week, midterms, and all the other no-work days are gone, there are only about thirteen weeks left to teach in) isn't a how-to book; it's a book about "teaching and thinking about teaching." But for my money, it is a how-to book—a very level-headed one, mercifully devoid of theoretical or pedagogical hobbyhorses. This lack of bias makes it worthwhile as a training text. Hashimoto sets himself the most basic but most debatable of problems: given just thirteen weeks, a world of theories and methods, and more knowledge than we could hope to impart in three years, what skills should our students learn and how best can we teach them? To answer he begins with the broader issues of course design and realistic expectations, then moves through assigning and grading writing to the minutiae of specific skills, and finally addresses the problem of how much style we can hope to teach.

to best do it. His common-sense approach to what he thinks we should teach is comfortable—who will argue about the value of thesis statements, topic sentences, and transitions? To justify teaching a technique or a particular part of the composition process, he explains how that element functions. He doesn't, for example, really talk about topic sentences. Instead, he talks about "Highlighting Information" (143), a phrase that indicates why we use topic sentences and one that helps the new teacher explain to students why they're important.

When Hashimoto talks about how he teaches, however, the book becomes less valuable. The assignments are idiosyncratic, to say the least. One begins with a "quotation" from H.Z. Zilch's *The Greenest Watermelon*: "One of the major problems with the Skersnergowsker is that when it flimbles with an actual Skittle, it turns even the brightest minds from the contemplation of the human soul to the love of butterflies" (236). Students must answer the question, "Is Zilch correct?" An assignment like that works only if introduced by the mind that dreamed it up and so knows where it's supposed to go.

But this is not really a problem. What makes our profession at once frustrating and entertaining is its dependence on idiosyncracy. We each must discover what kinds of assignments we're best at teaching; there is no right way, only "the way that works for me." Hashimoto says more than once that he's not trying to supply lesson plans. Besides, these assignments will prove valuable to some because they will suggest other equally idiosyncratic but personally useful assignments.

The beauty of *Thirteen Weeks* as a teaching text is its refusal to adopt any theoretical bias. It's clear from what he writes that Hashimoto has gone the route any good teacher travels—reading, experimenting, occasionally incorporating, and often discarding. He leaves the new teacher plenty of room to do the same, but provides a secure place to begin.

sters and youngsters—the youngsters actually listening—folklore assignments should be fun to research, to discuss, or to write about. What takes this book out of the category of another dull "how to" text for teachers is the number of specific examples of folklore Simons uses.

Simons' enthusiasm encourages us to try assignments far away from "What I Did on My Summer Vacation."

The first several chapters of *Worlds* describe why and how folklore works for teenage writing students, and in them Simons uses a favorite (mine) bit of Mexican-Indian-Spanish folklore, the story of La Llorona—a ghostlike figure forever looking for her dead children—a story used to convince children to stay in the house at night. Already I am hooked. Wouldn't a student also be, whether

this draft be read for the class or the group. (Consideration of spelling or sentence structure should not occur here but during revision.) The listeners specify to the writer what they like, what they see as the main idea or purpose, and what questions they have.

Selecting the topic of naming of names, Simons uses her own writing on the topic to prime the students. Her religion and marital status determine what her names are and in what order they occur. This raises questions like Who does the naming? Why? When? Students also make up a list of questions on naming customs to ask peers, family mem-

moto sets himself the most basic but most debatable of problems: given just thirteen weeks, a world of theories and methods, and more knowledge than we could hope to impart in three years, what skills should our students learn and how best can we teach them? To answer he begins with the broader issues of course design and realistic expectations, then moves through assigning and grading writing to the minutiae of specific skills, and finally addresses the problem of how much style we can hope to teach.

In the first section he cleans house as only an experienced teacher can, pointing out what we are unable to teach, what we'd like to teach but will probably fail to, what we just don't need to teach, and for all of them, why we shouldn't. We can't teach taste in thirteen weeks, assuming we can at all. And forget creativity; students either have it or they don't. Nor will we have time to reacquaint them with grammatical terminology. If we suggest that the best way to prepare a research paper is with notecards, we mislead them since there are so many other good ways. His advice is wise, born of experience.

The rest of the book talks about what we can and should teach, and why, and how

ments we're best at teaching, there is no right way, only "the way that works for me." Hashimoto says more than once that he's not trying to supply lesson plans. Besides, these assignments will prove valuable to some because they will suggest other equally idiosyncratic but personally useful assignments.

The beauty of *Thirteen Weeks* as a teaching text is its refusal to adopt any theoretical bias. It's clear from what he writes that Hashimoto has gone the route any good teacher travels—reading, experimenting, occasionally incorporating, and often discarding. He leaves the new teacher plenty of room to do the same, but provides a secure place to begin.

☐ Hashimoto, irvin I. *Thirteen Weeks: A Guide to Teaching College Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, Heinemann, 1991. 263 pages, paper. $17.50.

Robin Jeffers chairs the English Department at Don Bosco. Before that, she taught in the Writing Programs at UCLA.

ORAL VERSUS WRITTEN, NOT THIS TIME

by DELORES M. HOLLAR
El Camino College

Since storytelling is enjoying a comeback, perhaps we can talk and listen to each other again, instead of each of us sitting in our air-conditioned rooms, each individually watching our favorite television programs. How is this applicable to teaching writing in the schools? Elizabeth Radin Simons explains to writing teachers of high school students—and includes ideas we who teach at a community college can use efficiently in our basic writing classes. Her work *Student Worlds, Student Words: Teaching Writing Through Folklore* contains a complete set of day-to-day plans for turning folklore into writing assignments that students can work with while learning about themselves, their families, their neighborhoods, their memories. Encouraging communication between old-

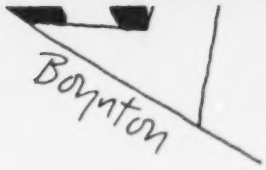
Simons' enthusiasm encourages us to try assignments far away from "What I Did on My Summer Vacation."

The first several chapters of *Worlds* describe why and how folklore works for teenage writing students, and in them Simons uses a favorite (mine) bit of Mexican-Indian-Spanish folklore, the story of La Llorona—a ghostlike figure forever looking for her dead children—a story used to convince children to stay in the house at night. Already I am hooked. Wouldn't a student also be, whether or not that student comes from the same culture as the story/storyteller? Simons thinks so. Or a student can volunteer another story with the same purpose—keeping the children home at night. As one who is interested in myth, legend, and folklore as well as storytelling, but one who also teaches composition for students struggling in English as a Second Language, I see potential right away.

Some of the folklore topics Simons suggests are American, but since all cultures tell and retell stories on creation, family life, rites of passage, behavior, stories overlap from culture to culture. Native and non-native speakers will discover similar stories, and the differences in the folktales can provoke good class discussion.

But what is folklore? According to Simons, quoting Alan Dundes, a professor of anthropology and folklore at Berkeley, "Folklore always tells it like it is or at least tells it as some people think it is or as they would like it to be. Folklore is a kind of popular pulse, ever indicating what is on a people's mind and in a people's heart" (xi). Some examples include Telephone Pranks, Stories Our Families Tell About Us, School and Teen Folklore, and Modern Urban Legends: The Shopping Mall.

So that peers can compare ideas and memories on the topics, Simons advocates collaborative learning. She suggests that a first draft be made of some facet of the topic and that



Selecting the topic of naming of names, Simons uses her own writing on the topic to prime the students. Her religion and marital status determine what her names are and in what order they occur. This raises questions like Who does the naming? Why? When? Students also make up a list of questions on naming customs to ask peers, family members, and others, such as the very elderly, teachers, and clergymen. Simons follows up with reading assignments on naming, and the student may choose to stay with their original selection for writing or switch to one of more interest now that they have done a bit of research.

According to Simons, as the students work on this assignment, they discuss, become involved with others, and learn something about themselves that they may not have thought of before. The discussion of different naming customs and the reading of first drafts to the group allow the students more thinking through of the topic than they may achieve working individually.

Whereas Simons takes the assignment into minor research and student involvement with family and community, I use the topic as a diagnostic writing tool. Even if students do not know what their names mean or where their names came from, they can discuss whether or not their name fits them and if they would like to change their name, to what and why. An assignment that prods the students into learning more about themselves is the best kind of assignment, so this paper topic always works well. And as Simons mentions, this is a good icebreaker in a new class.

I also use for brief assignments two that Simons explores fully as folklore: photo-

(REVIEWS, Continued on Page 9)

REVIEWS

(Continued from Page 8)

graphs, shown around the group as the first draft is read, and heroes. The student must first define what she means by "hero"—someone admired, perhaps, whose life she wishes to emulate, or some childhood hero whom she has outgrown. I like to include villains, often deliciously evil!

In presenting the material, Simons cites actual class dialogue to show that her opinions are based on experience, on in-class discussions. To problems that may arise, such as a slowing of discussion, she suggests possible solutions like interjecting another incidence of folklore related to the topic or helping with interview questions. But Simons likes the students to present their own ideas for acceptance or rejection by the group. As folklore is "of the people," so are Simons' classes that teach writing through folklore.

At the end of each chapter on a specific kind of folklore, Simons includes a "Unit in Brief," a condensation of the whole "unit," as she calls each assignment. I especially like the chapter on graffiti, which, as in all the chapters, divides the activities into days. On Day One, once Simons overcomes student astonishment that scholars actually study graffiti, she uses word association for students' brainstorming of different types of graffiti. Again arise the questions of who writes it, why, age groups, and gender. She moves through the entire assignment from the history of graffiti to a "publishing"—a putting together—of the students' final graffiti papers. At the end of each unit, Simons provides reading materials relating to that folklore topic. At the end of her book, she provides valuable information on where to find further materials, specific or tangential, even organizing them in categories of interest to student and teacher or teacher alone.

This book is a good teaching aid because it lays out all aspects of the assignments. Simons uses plain, precise language—as she of writing can make revisions less boring. Simons convinces us so. And if we talk to each other—and listen to each other, which is even more important—about our beliefs, our pasts, our heritage, and can record them, are not all participants rewarded?

If nothing else, Simons gives us writing teachers fresh ideas for student writing assignments. Oh, how we can use them!

☐ Simons, Elizabeth Radin. *Student Worlds, Student Words: Teaching Writing Through Folklore*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook (Heinemann) Publishers, 1990. 232 pages.

Delores M. Hollar presently teaches part time at El Camino College and California State University, Dominguez Hills. She has a Masters Degree in English from CSUDH and studied at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, School for Overseas Students, with a specialty in Middle Eastern Languages and Literature. She was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar in Islamic Poetry and Literature at the University of Chicago in 1983.

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Roberts, Edgar V. and Henry E. Jacobs. *Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*. 3rd ed. Prentice Hall, 1992.

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Taylor, Ann. *Shaping the Short Essay*. HarperCollins, 1991.

Voss, Ralph F. and Michael L. Keene. *The*

Again arise the questions of who writes it, why, age groups, and gender. She moves through the entire assignment from the history of graffiti to a "publishing"—a putting together—of the students' final graffiti papers. At the end of each unit, Simons provides reading materials relating to that folklore topic. At the end of her book, she provides valuable information on where to find further materials, specific or tangential, even organizing them in categories of interest to student and teacher or teacher alone.

This book is a good teaching aid because it lays out all aspects of the assignments. Simons uses plain, precise language—as she should. But the book reads handily because of the use of students' dialogue and specific suggestions—and challenges—the students bring to the discussions. Here is the color of the language. Writing assignments need not be dull. Simons combines the teaching of writing with an enthusiastic student venture into the fun of folklore. Simons' suggestions for interviews supply an invaluable tool for bringing youngsters together with oldsters, actually talking and listening to each other. Bringing to the peer group the findings of the interviews and listening to each student's first draft gives the students something worthwhile to write. My own students of English as a Second Language enjoyed other cultures' stories. Reading of final drafts, aloud to the entire class, always has been popular. Since Simons' folklore topics have been discussed in the peer groups, even the shy students or those who feel they don't write well feel comfortable reading in front of the class.

As writing instructors, we have stressed the difference between speaking and writing, the structure and the form of the language differences. If we can bring forth the detailing of the orally told stories, concentrating on fact and fiction in them, the fleshing out of the material, surely adding basic grammatical rules to put them into a readable form should be easier than the other way around. Revisions are boring. Maybe this method

BOOKS TO REVIEW

If you are interested in reviewing any of the following books, please notify the editor (see page 2). The book will be sent to you, and your review should be submitted within two months of receiving the book. Please follow the proper manuscript form (see page 2).

Abcarian, Richard and Marvin Klotz, eds. *Literature: The Human Experience. Shorter Fifth Edition with Essays*. St. Martin's, 1992.

Ackley, Katherine Anne. *Essays from Contemporary Culture*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

Barnet, Sylvan, ed. Literature for Composition: Essays, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama. 3rd ed. HarperCollins, 1991.

Bartel, Roland. *Metaphors and Symbols: Forays into Language*. NCTE, 1983. [An older, still valuable book that has never been reviewed.]

Bergman, David and Daniel Mark Epstein. *The Heath Guide to Literature*. 3rd ed. Heath, 1992.

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Wadsworth Writer's Guide and Handbook. Wadsworth, 1989.

Hall, Donald. *To Read Literature: Fiction, Poetry, Drama*. 3rd ed. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

Hefferman, William A. and Mark Johnston. *The Harvest Reader*. 2nd ed. Harcourt

erature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing. 3rd ed. Prentice Hall, 1992.

Rosen, Leonard J. and Laurence Behrens. *The Allyn & Bacon Handbook*. Allyn & Bacon, 1992.

Schaum, Melita and Connie Flanagan. *Gender Images: Readings for Composition*. Houghton Mifflin, 1992.

Smoke, Trudy. *A Writer's World: Explorations through Reading*. St. Martin's Press, 1990.

Taylor, Ann. *Shaping the Short Essay*. HarperCollins, 1991.

Voss, Ralph F. and Michael L. Keene. *The Heath Guide to College Writing*. Heath, 1992.

Winterowd, W. Ross and Geoffrey R. Winterowd. *The Critical Reader, Thinker, and Writer*. Mayfield, 1992.

PROBLEM CLASSES

(Continued from Page 5)

very quiet. After three sets of papers students have not demonstrated that they understand the concept of narrative theme, which they ought to now discern at the end of a process by which they first identify a film story's subject, then note how resolution spins subject in a certain declarable direction—theme. Grasping this process never comes easily to students, and this particular class had not struck me as especially gifted. I could have pulled back, expected less, struck a bargain with what I felt was the reality of the class. I also could have retreated into negativism.

No. Instead I have remained cheerful while also hammering away at the process of determining narrative theme. I have been over the same material film after film. At times I felt that I was doing this just for me, that no one else in the room gave a damn. But I quickly got back on the positive track.

Then just two weeks ago I received a miraculous batch of papers, a complete one-eighty. Virtually every one of the papers demonstrated a commendable grasp of theme as perceived in a wide variety of films students saw out of class, which I never commented on. They had taken principles I had taught them and applied them to particulars, which, after all, is what education is supposed to be about.

I used to think classes took on their own personalities, as our children do, going their own ways in spite of what we do to them. If this child is quiet and withdrawing and the other outgoing in spite of having been raised under the same roof with the same parents and values, the reason is genetic, cosmic, unalterable—and it is the same with classes. Once a bad class always a bad class. You resigned yourself to what you got and counted the weeks until you were rid of it. Now I know better. Maybe we can't always mold our children to be what we want, but classes are as putty in our hands. The trick is to keep smiling and expect the best.

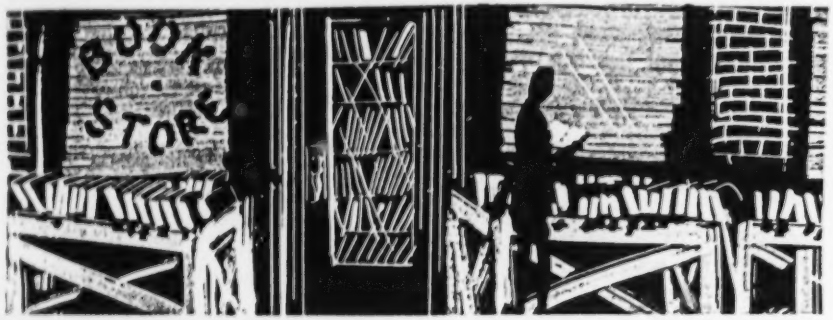
Jim Piper has taught English and film full time at Fresno City College since 1965 and served as chair from 1986 until 1990. He has published two English texts and one trade text on filmmaking.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BUILDING INTELLECTUAL MUSCLES

Whole Books vs. Anthologies

by L.V. KRIKORIAN
Los Angeles Pierce College



As a mid-1970's community college transfer student, I faced one substantial jolt of reality at the UC San Diego bookstore. I cannot forget asking a boy what classes he had, since his arms were both laden up to the biceps. "Class," he corrected me; "Poli. Sci." I was used to buying one textbook or anthology per class. But university students often cart up to the checkstand five to ten books per lower-division survey. We academics call such books primary sources, and I call them whole books. Besides increasing muscle tone, piles of whole books strengthen students' minds in ways missed by our English 101 anthologies.

Still, an anthology offers definite advantages to all interested parties. At the very least, students who buy an anthology know what to bring to class! And then there are financial considerations. Theoretically, one anthology costs less than a stack of whole books; although, with the cost of textbooks rising, a half-dozen pocket books may in fact cost less. Also, anthologies and textbooks often make money for living people as opposed to "classical authors," whose common factor is that they are dead. Money aside, one must also consider curriculum selection as it affects pedagogy. Clearly, one can cover many more authors and periods with an anthology than with five whole books. And since no one can cover every page of five to ten substantial works in a quarter or semester of discussion, teachers who use an anthology are saved the hassle of excerpting certain portions from primary works.

But that means we, as teachers, are lazy. Or perhaps we fear that the students will contradict our reading of the primary text by bringing up portions of it which we may not understand or do not intend to cover in class. I am not even sure what cover—as opposed to study, explicate, or criticize—means. It may be more painful or difficult to wrestle with all of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* rather than a six page excerpt, but dare we speak to students against the evils of decontextualizing someone's ideas when, essentially, an anthology does so? I, too, am tempted to edit an anthology that suits my tastes and agendas, for the money and the personal satisfaction. Having worked two years in HBJ's Trade Advertising Department, I may know more about publishing than some teachers and would probably be less at the mercy of a publisher, too. But I think I would rather try a couple years of teaching English 101 with whole books.

Besides wishing to acclimate transfer students to the university and avert the shock of whole books and besides fearing decontextualization, I fear our anthology-making further whittles down the canon. It is not enough that we exclude many books from being read in lower division classes. For example, many of us can almost recite the "Declaration of Independence," but did you know that Jefferson's only full length work, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, offers his candid and delicately-hazarded hypothesis that blacks are less intelligent than whites and Native Americans? I say, it is not enough that we exclude some entire works from the curriculum; we excerpt and excise in order to avoid many of the hot parts, too.

Eighteen-year-old students are mature enough to consider Rousseau's masturbation fetish as an example of his grand egotism in *The Confessions*; John Stuart Mill's caustic view of deism in the long essay "Nature," so virulent an attack that even a great "steam engine" of a man published it posthumously; Flannery O'Connor's full-length treatment of various, common obsessions in *Wise Blood*. Eighteen-year-olds may take their last English class with us, even if they go on to a great university. For three years I taught at UCLA, where English 3, freshman composition, is the *only* required English course for many majors. We may get one shot with these students. Let us go, then, and join the classical authors one day with a clear conscience, knowing that we, at least, forced the video generation to read a half-dozen books.

Larry Krikorian directs the Honors Program at L.A. Pierce, where he reads and teaches whole books.

IMPOSING *KING LEAR*

(Continued from Page 3)

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is it possible Silber failed in his campaign for the governorship of Massachusetts at least in part because the good people of Massachusetts didn't know their Shakespeare?

So how, exactly, do I go about teaching *King Lear*? Because I realize students find Shakespeare relatively inaccessible at first, I ease into the course by showing the Olivier filmed version, by all accounts one of Sir Lawrence's last great roles. I also share with them the deep, dark, and dreadful secret of "Cliff's Notes" (with the caveat that study guides can never

each week, only two or three of the selections from the reader are usually required. On the average, students find themselves doing from six to eight hours of outside homework per week. The most conscientious, of course, do much more.

I don't have them write on Lear every week. That would be overkill, even for me. But approximately every third essay, including the research paper, is based on the play. This semester, for example, students will write a total of four papers on *King Lear* and another seven or eight on a variety of other topics, many of their own choosing. Many of these papers will be re-written at least once.

The first *Lear* paper is typically a process analysis essay

be constructed around any pre-approved topic concerning the play. The first time I made this assignment, I discovered yet another reason I feel constrained to impose this particular work on my composition students. I remembered having written a research paper on *King Lear* at some point in my college career and spent a weekend rummaging through some old papers in hopes of finding it. Imagine my shock and delight when I not only found the paper, but discovered that it had been written in *my* English composition class! Imagine also the great fun they have when I ask them to turn the tables on the teacher by marking up and grading *my* adolescent effort!

244

Also, anthologies and textbooks often make money for living people as opposed to "classics," written by folks who have long since given up on royalty checks.)

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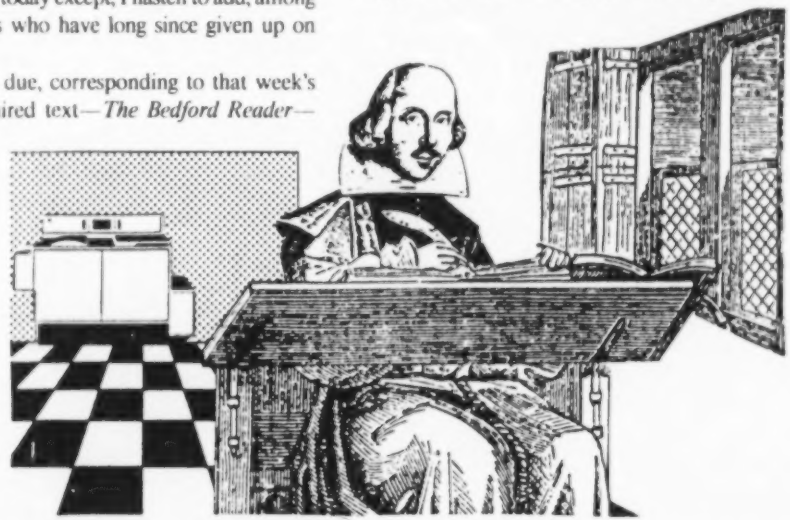
Each week an essay is due, corresponding to that week's chapter in the other required text—*The Bedford Reader*—



and the expository *mode du jour*. (Although some of what they read is fiction, I insist that all student writing—including any narrative or descriptive essays I might require—include a clear thesis statement.) But because I ask them to read and re-read approximately fifteen to twenty pages of *King Lear* each week, only two or three of the selections from the reader are usually required. On the average, students find themselves doing from six to eight hours of outside homework per week. The most conscientious, of course, do much more.

I don't have them write on Lear every week. That would be overkill, even for me. But approximately every third essay, including the research paper, is based on the play. This semester, for example, students will write a total of four papers on *King Lear* and another seven or eight on a variety of other topics, many of their own choosing. Many of these papers will be re-written at least once.

The first *Lear* paper is typically a process analysis essay. While students approach this assignment from a variety of perspectives, I can always count on several to discuss how Edmund uses "reverse psychology" to deceive Gloucester, his father, and Edgar, his half brother.

For the next *Lear* paper, I invariably have them do a comparison/contrast essay in which they are to determine which of the two sisters—Goneril or Regan—is the more evil. Interestingly, the class was evenly split on this question this past semester, but students usually select Goneril as the wicked winner. I like this assignment particularly because it also requires them to grapple with their own values with respect to "evil."

Also required is a modest research paper of eight to ten pages, which is to include MLA in-text citations and may be constructed around any pre-approved topic concerning the play. The first time I made this assignment, I discovered yet another reason I feel constrained to impose this particular work on my composition students. I remembered having written a research paper on *King Lear* at some point in my college career and spent a weekend rummaging through some old papers in hopes of finding it. Imagine my shock and delight when I not only found the paper, but discovered that it had been written in *my* English composition class! Imagine also the great fun they have when I ask them to turn the tables on the teacher by marking up and grading *my* adolescent effort!

These research papers, typically the first real research papers these students have ever been asked to write, are certainly challenging, but they are given three to four weeks to put them together and outlines, rough drafts, etc. are turned in as they proceed so I can guide them in the process. Although plagiarism is always a possibility with such an unlimited topic, my students know by now that I am quite familiar with their writing styles and that cheating of any kind means pain and suffering. (Depending on whether they favor Regan or Goneril they can elect to be hanged instantly or have their eyes plucked out.)

Some of the more interesting papers I have received from this assignment carried the following titles: "Extremism in *King Lear*: Why Albany is the **Real** Hero"; "Cordelia, A Fool for Virtue"; "Peering into Lear's Shadow: A Study of The Fool"; and "The Naked Truth of Madness."

For the final *Lear* paper, I sometimes ask students to write a definition essay in which they define, for themselves, what constitutes a "classic" and in which they discuss whether classical works of literature should be required reading in college. Earlier in the semester, many students would be tempted to tell me what I want to hear, but by this point they are usually quite honest. While most admit to an initial sensation of fear and trembling, the majority concludes that *King Lear* has become an unexpected pleasure that should continue to be foisted upon those students who follow them into The Dean's Class.

There are, however, a number of objections to this approach, which anyone considering it must certainly weigh.

The first, which comes as often from colleagues as it does from students, is that Shakespeare is too hard. Of course it's challenging. Most things worth doing are. But if our course is to be considered equivalent to an undergraduate English

(IMPOSING KING LEAR, *Continued on Page 11)*

IMPOSING *KING LEAR*

(Continued from Page 10)

course at virtually any college or university, isn't it only fair that we give students something to read that is worthy of serious reflection? Don't we owe it to our students to arm them with the tools they will need for success in college? Even if doing this increases our attrition rate (and I must admit that a few students drop my class each semester as soon as they learn about this "extra" requirement), isn't our first obligation to the serious student who is willing to rise to a reasonable challenge?

The second objection is that this should be a **composition** rather than a **literature** class. Therefore, students should be restricted to a diet of expository essays rather than poetry, drama, or other high falutin' "Literature." My answer is that they do need sample essays to see what we expect of them. That is why I use a reader and distribute occasional essays on current events from *Time* or *Newsweek*. But they also deserve a bit of the truly great stuff, particularly since it encourages them to think and write about universal, even cosmic issues with which they might not otherwise grapple.

Finally, there is the Dead White Male argument. Some argue—a few rather vociferously—that given our changing society and the multicultural/multiracial make-up of today's students, the likes of Shakespeare simply are no longer "relevant." It is a shame that most of the great philosophy and literature that has shaped our culture was written by white males, now, perforce, mostly deceased. Women and people of color surely would have made equally great cultural contributions—perhaps even greater—had they been given the opportunity. But aside from making students aware of some important voices that have not been fully heard, historical reality cannot be changed, and I make no apologies and no excuses.

I refuse to give my students, no matter who they happen to be, the illusion that they can skip the historical, philosophical, and artistic foundations of the Western world in which they happen to be immersed. All of us need to develop a deep, multicultural perspective, and students from non-Western cultures deserve to receive validation of their own cultural backgrounds. But the Western foundation is critical to all of us. I have read the *Bhagavad-Gita* and am just now completing a study of the *Our'an*. But without a firm grounding in the *Old* and *New Testaments*, what would be the point, given my place in history?

However, we needn't be extremists in this. Just as I caution my students when we study argumentation, we must avoid stand Shakespeare. The wonderful thing about education is you don't have to *be* it to understand it, to feel it" (Giovanni). This point was beautifully confirmed by one of my Chicana students—recently elected as President of MECHA at Butte College—when she insisted that *King Lear* has as much to do with *her* family and *her* life as anyone else's.

So what conclusions can be drawn? How successful is this course? There are a couple of ways to approach that question. For any fellow administrators out there—who tend to favor objective data—I can report that the student evaluations for this course compare very favorably with other Butte College courses in general and even with other English courses. Not only is the mean overall rating consistently higher (which *could* simply be a reflection on the instructor), but so is the rating for the textbooks. When asked to "rate the quality and value of the textbooks required for the course," students recently came up with a mean rating of 3.01 on a 4.00 scale for the college as a whole, a 3.13 for all English classes, and a 3.42 for mine. Apparently Shakespeare is perceived as more of a plus than a minus.

Even more valuable to me are the students' comments. In the short statements that accompany the student evaluations (which, presumably, are genuine because I don't see them until after the grades are posted), I am always gratified to get comments like, "I would have never read Shakespeare in my life, but he made things interesting" or "I will keep *King Lear* forever." Even one of my "C" students found herself quoting Shelley, in declaring *King Lear* to be "the most perfect specimen of the dramatic art in the world" (339).

Not everyone, of course, is as positive. Scott, a "B" student who titled his final essay "A 'Classic' Confusion," argued that although *King Lear* is clearly a "classic," today's students should not be required to decipher its antiquated "mumbo jumbo" language. "In order to keep from confusing our young students with fragile minds," he offered censoriously, "we need to control what materials are used in the classroom." But Scott was not totally unyielding. He suggested that requiring *King Lear* might be supportable if a version with "pictures" could be made available. I can see it now—"The Classics Illustrated" approach to English composition!

But Scott is definitely in the minority. As fortune would have it, I received a phone call from one of Scott's classmates as I was writing this paper. Alicia, who had also received a "B," called to tell me she had been accepted to a CSU campus as an English major. "Why English?" I asked her. "Because of your class," she responded. "Because of *King Lear*. I just wanted you to know."

AMNESTY

"For what must I be forgiven?"
Lucia walked from Guatemala, was shot
at the Mexican border, turned back,
returned again and again until
she could bribe her way North.
She sits in my 6 A.M. class
struggling to tell her story.
I write her tales on the board
refuse to correct grammar,
want voice, hands, sturdy feet,
weight of eight years' hiding.

Soon I must teach
simple present, present continuous,
how many stars in the flag, what the stripes stand for.
The students must
know address, social security, alienation number;
repeat names in the same sequence each time,
demonstrate comprehension of democracy
to men who want to deport them.

"For what must I be forgiven?" Lucia protests,

opportunity. But aside from making students aware of some important voices that have not been fully heard, historical reality cannot be changed, and I make no apologies and no excuses.

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However, we needn't be extremists in this. Just as I caution my students when we study argumentation, we must avoid

the "either/or" fallacy. One of the reasons I use *The Bedford Reader* is its inclusion of writings by Maya Angelou, Richard Rodriguez, Ralph Ellison, Ellen Goodman, Curtis Chang, Martin Luther King, Jr., Bruno Bettelheim, and Alice Walker. In the future, I may choose another reader with an even greater emphasis on feminist and multicultural perspectives. But in doing this, I shall never abandon my commitment to help students gain a foothold in the literature and philosophy that has, for good or for bad, so strongly influenced the cultural ethos of our nation.

As the final point in response to this objection, I offer the following, from the poet, Nikki Giovanni: "No one ever told me that as a black woman I couldn't read Milton; no one told me because I'm not a white Englishman I couldn't under-

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Please don't misunderstand me. I am not arguing that *King Lear* is the *Summa Litteraria* of English Composition. I may even get bored with *Lear* and go on to another of Shakespeare's great plays for my composition class. Or I might choose Homer or Dante or Dostoevsky. (I'm sure Scott would have loved the Grand Inquisitor!) But I'll never return to teaching the way I used to, relying exclusively on twentieth century writers who may or may not be considered "great" a hundred or a thousand years hence.

I have not given up hope of convincing my colleagues that Butte College needs to develop at least one core humanities course, based on the intellectual and cultural foundations of Western civilization and required of all our students. As an idealist, I believe in the words carved on the walls of the Sorbonne: "Be Realistic—Demand the Impossible." But as an academic dean, I know better. I once heard a college defined as a group of mutually repellent particles held together by a common interest in parking. There are days I almost believe that, as well. So while I continue in my "glib and oily art" to encourage the development of a common vision among our humanities faculty, I insist on periodically teaching a class of my own, for that is the one place I possess real power, the one place I can pursue my vision in total freedom.

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The students must
know address, social security, alienation number;
repeat names in the same sequence each time,
demonstrate comprehension of democracy
to men who want to deport them.

"For what must I be forgiven?" Lucia protests,
yet knocks on the classroom door
every day at 5:45 eager to speak
of the mother who ripped her dress,
the women whose babies she bathes,
the husband who waits for her with flowers.

The other students copy her story,
dictate theirs. All study
capitals, periods, commas, question marks.
What is simple, what continues
are the sweets they offer
their grouchy teacher, rumpled, barely awake,
who leads them sardonically through the Pledge,
who obsesses with them on amendments and laws,
who is just as terrified as they
of the Test for Naturalization,
who would not forgive if one were sent back.

NANCY SHIFFRIN
Los Angeles City College

Nancy Shiffrin teaches a workshop in Creative Writing and Culture at Learning Tree University. She teaches privately at various locations around Los Angeles. She's working on a Ph.D. in American Literature.

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Roger Robin Ekins is Dean of Instruction (Area II) at Butte College, where he regularly teaches a composition or creative writing course in the English Department. This paper was adapted from a presentation he made at the Pacific-Western Division Conference of the Community College Humanities Association in Portland, Oregon, in November of 1990. Dr. Ekins currently serves as Vice President of the California Humanities Association.

$ACRAMENTO $CENE

CC Budget Looks Good—Will It Hold?

by KAREN S. GROSZ
Santa Monica College

STATE BUDGET

What happened! Governor Pete Wilson is on our side with his 1992-93 budget proposal! He is proposing a $328 million (10.1 percent) increase for community colleges over the 1991-92 budget. The proposal includes giving community colleges a 1.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), compared to zero for the current year. That's all part of the governor's call for fully funding Proposition 98.

Don't start spending the additional money yet, however. The governor is asking the Democratic controlled legislature to more adequately finance kindergarten-through-twelfth grade education and the community colleges at the expense of welfare programs dear to Democratic hearts.

The obvious and most important issue facing us at local, state, and national levels is the budget. While President Bush's popularity rating continues to drop because of his inability to ease the money into a more rosy economy, Governor Wilson has risked a protracted battle with the legislature. Wilson's proposal that Proposition 98 receive full funding, partly at the expense of welfare programs, does not appear to have received favorable support from state legislative leaders. At the local level, then, colleges cannot proceed to plan their 1992-93 budgets on the basis of the governor's proposal, for there is no assurance that it will survive the legislative negotiations that will extend until, if not through, the summer. On the other hand, it might have been worse: the University of California faces another large fee increase next year, 24 percent to $2,824, on top of the 40 percent fee hike imposed in 1991, and the governor urged the California State University to adopt a 40 percent fee increase, to $1,310, on top of a 20 percent increase in 1991-92.

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HATE SPEECH

That dirty "H" word won't go away. An amendment to existing state law adds colleges and universities to a hate speech provision that previously applied only to public schools. Under the new law, academic institutions "have an affirmative obligation to combat racism, sexism, and other forms of bias . . . ." $10,000, in contrast to those who choose to attend the UC for all four years of undergraduate education.

THREE-DAY WORKWEEK

A bill by Senator Art Torres, SB956, would discourage businesses from scheduling employees to twelve-hour days and three-day work weeks. The legislation would require two-thirds of the workers to approve scheduling a three-day work week. It should have little impact on professionals, such as college professors, whose work need not fit a traditional work week pattern.

NO STATE INITIATIVES

College, will examine

- Pedagogy for effective instruction of the new majority student
- Distance learning and new technology
- New Learning environments.

With $400,000 from the Ford Foundation, the Chancellor's Office has asked Berman-Weiler Associates to staff the task forces and the commission. Three meetings, tentatively scheduled in March, May, and September, will permit the task forces to develop and refine their recommendations.

FEDERAL BILLS AND RELATED RIGHTS

Note: Copies of bills may be obtained from Representatives (Washington 20515) or Senators (Washington 20510). Names and phone numbers of federal agency contacts have been included.

STUDENT LOANS

The most acrimonious discussion at the federal level has centered on the issue of Pell Grant "entitlement" through direct federal loans to students in two different versions of the Higher Education Act. President Bush has announced that he will veto the direct loan provision for fear of its "problems, risks and costs." Republican lawmakers objected to provisions for removing banks from the Pell Grant program and instead making them entitlements with full financing provided by Congress.

Meanwhile, the courts have upheld the Education Department regulation barring institutions with high default rates from participating in the guaranteed loan program. This decision could bar as many as 153 colleges from the student loan program because of a default rate of 35 percent or higher for three consecutive years, beginning in 1987. Lawyers had argued that the regulation was unconstitutionally retroactive and sought to have 1991 as the beginning date for default rates. Some California Community Colleges will feel the impact of this federal provision.

HR3663 (Weiss, D-NY) would permit withdrawal without penalty of funds from Individual Retirement Accounts to pay for college expenses. A related Senate provision, S1921, is authored by Senator Bentsen (D-Texas). And S1926 (Exon, D-Mass) would make savings bond interest used for college tuition exempt from federal income tax.

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Given the recent Supreme Court action ruling unconstitutional the hate speech code at the University of Wisconsin, institutions may find themselves hard pressed to craft a hate speech code that does not abrogate Constitutional rights to freedom of speech. Wisconsin had used previous Supreme Court action against other universities to prepare a code it considered legitimate.

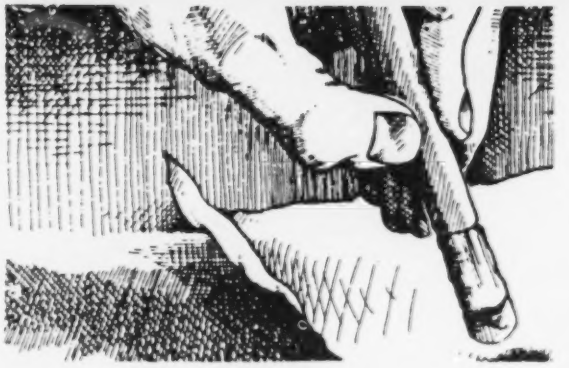
Also, at the federal level, Senator Craig has introduced a bill, S1484 (Craig, R-Idaho), that would deny federal student aid to campuses that have speech codes.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Perhaps in a spillover effect from the Clarence Thomas hearings, the state Assembly is considering laws to require employers to define sexual harassment, adopt ways to deal with employee complaints, and post notices of these actions (AB2264, Speier). In addition, employees would have two years to file sexual discrimination claims, one year more than under current law, and employers of fifteen or more would have to educate workers in an effort to prevent sexual harassment (AB2265, Speier).

TRANSFER LEGISLATION

The Master Plan provision that the University of California and California State University systems keep a 60:40 ratio of upper-to-lower-division students was signed into law by Governor Wilson. SB121 (Hart) could conceivably mean a cost savings to California taxpayers because funding differs for the three postsecondary systems. Students who begin their education at a community college save the state more than



NO STATE INITIATIVES

The *California Journal* reports that "For the first time in 26 years, . . . no statewide initiative has qualified for the June primary election ballot" (January, 1992: 4). Initiatives that failed to qualify concerned campaign funding and contribution limits, the initiative process itself, limitation upon government actions and service in government, health care, gaming commission and the lottery, legal practices and services, vacations, forestry practices, civil rights and discriminatory conduct, juries, marijuana, and a recall of Governor Wilson.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS' CHALLENGE XXI

The California Community Colleges' Board of Governors has launched its blue-ribbon commission charged with identifying ways the colleges can meet the needs of an expanding student population through innovative delivery systems and related measures.

The twenty-four member commission, chaired by Michael Peevey, president of Southern California Edison, will take recommendations from three task forces:

- Management, co-chaired by Chancellor Thomas Lakin, Ventura CCD, and Karen S. Grosz, faculty member at Santa Monica College, will examine
  - Finance and governance
  - College, district, and system organization and administration
  - External relations.
- Facilities, co-chaired by Superintendent Dianne Van Hook, College of the Canyons, and a faculty member will examine
  - Optimum use of existing and new facilities
  - Alternative learning sites
  - Telecommunications and distance learning.
- Instruction, co-chaired by Chancellor Augie Gallego, San Diego CCD, and Erna Noble, faculty member at Chaffey

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The Department of Education has proposed procedures for implementing the Student-Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act. Under these provisions, colleges must report information on campus crime, graduation rates, and athletic programs. For further information, contact Paula Husselmann, (202) 708-7888.

Changes in the visa rules may make it more difficult for foreign students on F-1 visas to accept off-campus work. While foreign students no longer need the permission of the immigration service to work off-campus, their off-campus employers must now demonstrate to the Department of Labor and to the student's college that they advertised widely and that they pay prevailing wages. This change may discourage employers from hiring foreign students.

Other federal action aims to change financial aid funding provisions and procedures. HR3997 (McCurdy, D-Okla) would require that high school seniors score in the 55th percentile or higher on a national college entrance examination or maintain a 2.8 average in non-elective courses to qualify for college financial aid. At the same time, the Department of Education has proposed a series of modifications in student aid regulations, from clarifying procedures for debarring, suspending, and eliminating colleges from federal student-aid programs (contact Mary Jane Kane, (202) 708-5580, for further information), to explaining the required qualifications for participation in federal student-aid programs (contact Carol F. Sperry, (202) 708-4906), to requiring students without high school diplomas to demonstrate ability to benefit (contact Cheryl Leibovitz, (202) 708-7888).

HR3860 (Neal) would set a maximum credit card limit for full-time students and would also prohibit students under eighteen from obtaining credit cards. And S1865 (Roth, R-Del) would require credit checks for student loan recipients over age twenty-one.

USING CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

Teachers as Researchers

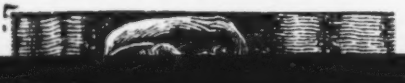
by JIM WHEARTY and KIM WOLTERBEEK
Foothill College

Every teacher, at one time or another, has entered a classroom confident with her lesson plan and assured in her relationship with her students, only to leave fifty minutes later with head slightly akimbo, one eye a bit tensed, the refrain "I wonder" heavy on her mind: "I wonder if the students all understood." "I wonder what their gut reactions are." "I wonder if they see the connection between today's lessons and the 'big picture.'" And on. And on. Pat Cross and Tom Angelo, of the University of California, Berkeley, published *Classroom Assessment Techniques* to remove such doubt from teachers' minds.

To answer such questions of our own, we began systematically employing classroom assessment techniques in our writing classes last spring after completing a workshop on Classroom Research. (Foothill was selected as one of ten Northern California community colleges to participate in the Classroom Research Assessment of the Learning Assessment Retention Consortium [LARC] and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education [FIPSE]).

With little experience in the "Scientific Method," we were immensely comforted by the immediate distinction between *educational* research, a long-term endeavor that culminates in theoretical conclusions with broad applications, and *classroom* research. For, whereas *educational* research is enormously important in our field, we were to engage in *classroom* research, short-term assessments providing information about what and how students learn in individual classrooms. We learned the basics of Classroom Assessment Techniques, that they are "learner-centered," "teacher-directed," "quick and easy to use" (Angelo, *Materials* handout 9B) and focus on "alterable variables"—aspects of teaching and learning behavior that can be altered mid-course to promote better learning (Cross, "Introduction" 4).

We learned, in short, that our teacher intuitions, formed over years of contact with thousands of students, generate testable hypotheses worthy of individual and professional attention. Mightily relieved by the distinction between research styles



While most classroom assessments are anonymous, this one was not. Thus it was particularly important that when Wolterbeek presented the activity to her students she emphasized that there were no "right" responses, that since composing is a personal and recursive activity, the process being documented in their memos might appear idiosyncratic, even fragmented or redundant. "Don't worry about it," she reassured them. "Just be comprehensive and honest in your responses."

In analyzing the written records that showed how her students arrived at their finished essay, Wolterbeek was not surprised to discover the variety of composing processes at work in a single classroom. She was, however, amazed to discover that the composing process she had modeled ("rehearsing," "drafting," and "revising" [Murray 6]) seemed to confuse many of the students, and their confusion appeared to be centered around the prewriting activities: "I tried clustering," one of her students wrote, "but I was more lost after the exercise than before"; "I like to think through the main points of my paper," another confessed, "and freewriting sent me off in too many directions."

When she reported to the class the results of the assessment, an important consideration of classroom research, she confessed that in reevaluating her syllabus, she did seem to favor prewriting activities that spoke to her own particular learning style. The solution to her students' confusion seemed obvious. Wolterbeek introduced an alternate prewriting activity, outlining, which the less experiential or reflective learners were more comfortable with.

The **analytic memo** proved to be a mutually beneficial assessment tool. Besides providing Wolterbeek with instant feedback on the level of the students' comprehension, the act of writing the memo required her students to examine and take conscious note of their own composing processes. Equally important was the response of the students to her introducing research into the classroom. They seemed flattered that she would alter the syllabus to address their learning needs, and, subsequently, they became a more cohesive group of learners.

The second technique Wolterbeek used was **directed paraphrasing**. She asked her basic writing students to write a one-paragraph paraphrase of two assigned readings, a short story and an expository essay, for an audience of their peers.

Since Whearty was interested in matching student expectations with course goals, his assessment technique took the form of two **one-minute papers**. During the first week of class, he elicited from his students their expectations of the course, and then, two weeks later, he assigned a second memo to determine to what extent their expectations (or fears) were being fulfilled.

In the first memo, Whearty asked students in an advanced composition course to list their concerns and expectations. He was unprepared for the initial lists; what he thought would be a fairly uniform set of needs from a fairly homogeneous group of transferring students actually became a list containing surprising variations ranging from hopes for remediation ("help with organization of the bodies of paper," "I also need work on proofreading to catch my misspellings") to hopes for more advanced content ("I wanted insights to the craft of writing," "I want you to give me a new outlook on writing"). And

since many of the students enrolled had previously taken classes from Whearty, several students commented on his personal teaching style ("The style you had for teaching was also important").

After an initial juggling of his syllabus in an attempt to accommodate such disparity of expectations, Whearty assigned a second **one-minute paper** to assess the success of his attempts. With the information he collected, he would still be in a position to alter the direction or emphases of the class. In this second **one-minute paper**, Whearty asked three questions:

1. At the beginning of the quarter, what concerns did you want this class to address?
2. At the two week mark, to what extent are those concerns being addressed?
3. What suggestions can you make for the time remaining in the term?

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and buoyed by personal and collegial purposes, we completed a Teaching Goals Inventory (a self-scored form developed by K. Patricia Cross and Tom Angelo, UC Berkeley School of Education, 2/90) in order to identify and clarify what we were trying to teach in our pre-college and college-level writing courses. We then chose from among dozens of assessment techniques the four we felt best reflected our newly clarified goals. We would collect data in the form of "**analytic memos**" (Cross 56), "**directed paraphrasing**" (Cross 34), "**one-minute papers**" (Cross 148), and "**one-sentence summaries**" (Cross 52).

Kim Wolterbeek's first classroom assessment technique was content-centered (she wanted to see whether her students were learning what she thought she was teaching) and took the form of an *analytic memo*, a "short, structured writing assignment [that] provides high-quality feedback on students' analytic and writing skills . . . " (Cross 56). After students in her basic writing class had completed their first essay assignment, Wolterbeek asked them to respond to one question:

1. How would you describe the steps you took in your composing process?

the less experiential or reflective learners were more comfortable with.

The **analytic memo** proved to be a mutually beneficial assessment tool. Besides providing Wolterbeek with instant feedback on the level of the students' comprehension, the act of writing the memo required her students to examine and take conscious note of their own composing processes. Equally important was the response of the students to her introducing research into the classroom. They seemed flattered that she would alter the syllabus to address their learning needs, and, subsequently, they became a more cohesive group of learners.

The second technique Wolterbeek used was **directed paraphrasing**. She asked her basic writing students to write a one-paragraph paraphrase of two assigned readings, a short story and an expository essay, for an audience of their peers.

Most of the immediate oral reactions made by the students to this assessment procedure dealt with the mechanics of paraphrasing: "Can we just list major points?" "Do we have to cover everything or just the stuff that interested us?" "What if I can't remember the names of the characters in the Cheever story?" While she had taken a few minutes to discuss the mechanics of paraphrasing, apparently her explanation had been inadequate. In sorting through the anonymous one-paragraph paraphrases, she discovered that only half of the students had successfully paraphrased both readings. Some of the students had simply not done their homework, but even those who had clearly read the two assignments wrote paraphrases which were incomplete and confusing.

Wolterbeek's students had indeed provided her with an answer, but not to the question she had asked. While she had hoped to assess the level of student reading comprehension, she discovered instead that her students needed help in translating the essence of the readings into their own words. This proved to be a serendipitous discovery. During the next class meeting, she took the time to explain the mechanics of paraphrasing more carefully and demonstrated how they could use the technique as a study tool, as a way of synthesizing lecture materials and textbook readings. Since class time might not always allow for a thorough explanation of the assessment tool, Wolterbeek also learned how important it is to match the technique to the skill level of her students.

Jim Whearty's first assessment technique took the form of a **one-minute paper**. A **one-minute paper**, described elsewhere as "minute papers" or "half-sheet responses," is a quick and simple way to collect student responses or reactions to specifically worded questions, usually in the last few minutes of the class. A **one-minute paper** can concern itself with any facet of the class, from specific topics to classroom management. From Whearty, several students commented on his personal teaching style ("The style you had for teaching was also important").

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2. At the two week mark, to what extent are those concerns being addressed?
3. What suggestions can you make for the time remaining in the term?

By having students restate their earlier course expectations (question number one), Whearty received more specific, more focused responses to questions number two and three. ("[You're] making me think a whole lot about my writing," "It seems as though my skills will develop—I like the appositives assignment.") Given two weeks worth of Whearty's "style," students could also make more specific suggestions for the future of the class: ("I'm not particularly fond of working in a group, but I'm getting more out of it," "I hope there's more reading involved," "I hate combining sentences. Please, please, make it stop . . . Please. I'm begging you. It's hell.").

This assessment technique worked for Whearty because he assigned the second **one-minute paper** during a time in the quarter when he was able to accommodate change, another important consideration. Among other adjustments resulting from the second paper, Whearty no long imposed sentence combining on a class-wide basis. An unanticipated bonus occurred when a number of students commented about irritatingly late classmates. While Whearty had articulated a strict tardy policy in his class description, he hadn't strictly enforced it. Student comments afforded him a pedagogical avenue to reiterate his policy and enforce it successfully, proving once again that students' words often succeed where the teacher's fail.

The next technique Whearty used was the **one-sentence summary**. This technique asks the student "to answer the questions represented by WDWWHWWW (Who Does/Did What to Whom, How, When, Where, and Why?) about a given topic, and then to synthesize those answers into a single formative grammatical sentence . . ." (Cross 62). By having students create a WDWWHWWW matrix on a 3"×5" card, Whearty was able to limit the length of their responses.

(TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS, Continued on Page 14)

TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

(Continued from Page 13)

Title:	
Topic:	
QUESTION	RESPONSE
Who?	
Do What?	
To What or Whom?	
How?	
When?	
Where?	
Why?	

One-sentence summaries allowed Whearty to assess systematically how well he was meeting two of his major objectives in teaching Foothill's pre-transfer level composition class: successful student writing based upon given information and a carry-over of the skills refined in his class to other academic writing demands either in the English Department or across the campus.

Students writing in Whearty's class proceed through a series of tasks involving professional writing, from classifying to contrasting to synthesizing to arguing and discussing. Central to understanding each is the student's ability to summarize, a critical skill required in almost every academic enterprise. The **one-sentence summary** introduced, facilitated, and reinforced this skill in a format that was easily remembered and transferred to readings of greater length and complexity.

Once the students supplied the pieces of information required to complete the WDWWHWWW matrix, they could then combine them to create a single sentence on the back of the card to incorporate all the information. (This was a struggle at first for various reasons: 1.] students needed practice at the skill, and 2.] some of the summaries oversimplified the readings. Whearty's research suggests that with careful selection of texts, instructors can maximize the skill practice while minimizing the oversimplification.)

Before submitting the sentences, students "slashed" their work, separating the components for easier evaluation. With just a quick overview, Whearty was able to discern and indicate where students needed closer rereading. Whearty found that **one-sentence summaries** not only provided an important bit of scaffolding for various types of reading and writing tasks, but also led to several profitable findings:

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text, were increasingly able to distinguish textual "data" and their own opinions or interpretations;

- students more readily worked in groups with sentences limited "by the teacher, not me" for editing practice;
- students developed a real need for syntactic structures of greater complexity, giving practice in such activity purpose.

Our experience with classroom research has reaffirmed our belief that "good teaching requires a steady exploration of how students learn . . ." (Katz 5) and verified Parker Palmer's assertion that "[w]hen a class knows that it will be asked periodically to assess its own progress, everyone—the teacher included—comes to class with more intention and wit, more sense of being in this together" (Palmer 16). Classroom research has also proved reassuring to students in that it allows them to see commonalities in their academic goals and learning styles, actively engages them in the process of learning, and hastens their development into a cohesive community of learners.

And, finally, classroom research capitalizes upon teachers bold enough to say, "I wonder." It repositions us as experts in teaching and learning and as members of a community of scholars capable of developing, describing, and applying the knowledge shared within that community.

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Jim Whearty teaches English at Foothill College. He also works with the Bay Area Writing Project.

Kim Wolterbeek also teaches at Foothill College. She has previously been featured in inside english *and has published her short stories in numerous small presses.*

TO MY WRITING TEACHER

I can't make this essay any shorter.
This is about as short as I can make this essay.
I tried to tie it up all neatly
in a small essay stylesheet package like you said
but parts of it got loose
wheedled out of the wrappings
twisted down the table leg
out the door
and sproing-sproing-sproing
bounced into the street
to meet with parts of other untidy hearts.

The thing of it is
every part of this essay is needed.
The juvenile-delinquent-runaway parts
do something for the grown-up parts
and vice-versa
and anyway
you don't grade on neatness alone
do you
so I'll include a folder
for you to send my essay back in
all of it
and save another heart
from disfiguring surgery.

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LEONORA HOLDER DE AVILA

Once the students supplied the pieces of information required to complete the WDWWHWWW matrix, they could then combine them to create a single sentence on the back of the card to incorporate all the information. (This was a struggle at first for various reasons: 1.] students needed practice at the skill, and 2.] some of the summaries oversimplified the readings. Whearty's research suggests that with careful selection of texts, instructors can maximize the skill practice while minimizing the oversimplification.)

Before submitting the sentences, students "slashed" their work, separating the components for easier evaluation. With just a quick overview, Whearty was able to discern and indicate where students needed closer rereading. Whearty found that **one-sentence summaries** not only provided an important bit of scaffolding for various types of reading and writing tasks, but also led to several profitable findings:

- students compared summaries, thus enhancing the search for—and delight in—multiple or variant responses;
- students, having detached their own responses from the

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to meet with parts of other untidy hearts.

The thing of it is
every part of this essay is needed.
The juvenile-delinquent-runaway parts
do something for the grown-up parts
and vice-versa
and anyway
you don't grade on neatness alone
do you
so I'll include a folder
for you to send my essay back in
all of it
and save another heart
from disfiguring surgery.

LEONORA HOLDER DE AVILA

Ms. de Avila taught English and American Literature at Rio Hondo College for seventeen years. Since resigning three years ago, she has published poetry, essays, and book reviews in a number of literary journals and periodicals.

NOTICES

(Continued from Page 2)

parative Literature at the University of California at Irvine.

Registration fee: $100, due by June 22, also covers materials and three social events. Housing and air fare are extra.

For more information write Chuck Herd, The Pennsylvania State University, 409 Keller Conference Center, University Park, PA 16802.

9-12 August 1992. THE TWELFTH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CRITICAL THINKING AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM. Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, California.

Theme: "Cultivating the Reasoning Mind: Teaching, Testing, Standards, and Assessment."

For more information contact: Center for Critical Thinking and Moral Critique, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928.

8-10 October 1992. CRITICAL ISSUES IN BASIC WRITING: 1992. University of Maryland at College Park.

Keynote speaker: David Bartholomae of the University of Pittsburgh.

For registration information write NCTE Education Services, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS AND PROPOSALS

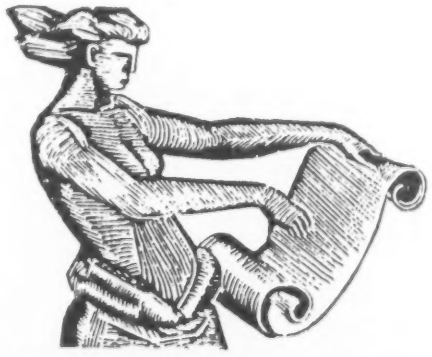
AMERICAN BOOKPEOPLE

Joseph Rosenblum solicits essays for a volume of *The Dictionary of Literary Biography* tentatively entitled *American Bookpeople*. The collection will focus on the collectors, booksellers, bibliographers, and librarians who have made significant contributions to American book culture.

For further information, write Joseph Rosenblum, English Department, University of North Carolina, Greenboro, NC 27412.

CALL FOR CONCEPT PAPERS

NCTE is interested in reviewing a limited number of papers for a new series, *Concept Papers in English*. The *Concept Papers* series provides an outlet for works that are too long for consideration as articles, but too short for publication as monographs or books. The series intends to present leading-edge thinking and will emphasize theoretical, exploratory essays in English literacy education at all teaching levels. Essays addressing such issues as reconceptualizing literacy, restructuring curriculum, and assessment theory are especially welcome. Please submit papers of thirty-five to fifty pages in length, double-spaced, to Publications, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.



OTHER NOTICES

THE AMERICAN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION is developing a newsletter. Those wishing to be on the mailing list should send a check for $5 made out to the American Literature Association to Professor Alfred Bendixen, English Department, California State University, Los Angeles, CA 90032-8110.

THE PROJECT ON THE HISTORY OF BLACK WRITING was formed in 1984, initially to identify all published novels written by African Americans since 1853. *The Afro-American Novel: A Guide for Teachers and Students*, first published in 1986, is being revised and expanded. In 1990 the project broadened its scope and objectives to provide a database and repository, housed at Northeastern University, and print and video resources available to scholars and teachers.

The HBW invites those interested to join. A $10 membership includes the newsletter and a 10 percent discount on database searches; a $25 membership includes the newsletter and a 15 percent discount. To join write: The Project on the History of Black Writing, Northeastern University, 406 Holmes Hall, Boston MA 02115.

BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS OF PREJUDICE

Holistic Learning in the Writing Classroom

by JAMES R. MUSGRAVE
Grossmont College/San Diego Mesa College

I came into teaching from the business world and from the Industrial Relations Center of the California Institute of Technology where I taught management development courses and administered seminars for the second oldest management training institute in the United States. I learned at Caltech that the best way to teach students for the "real world" is to get them to participate in the learning process as much as possible. In other words, the teaching style that I have evolved for my composition and literature classes is based on the "holistic learning approach" from my years at Caltech.

Basically, my method entails an approach to curriculum planning that involves the students at *all* levels of communications (not just the writing level). Why do I want my students to learn at all levels? Because the "real world" corporations and businesses want employees who can integrate their communication skills. What we have been creating in our classrooms in recent years, I am sorry to say, are students who are "fragmented"; that is, they learn how to write, how to compute, how to memorize, but they never really get the chance to use their entire communicative *being* in one classroom for one semester.

In the class I am going to describe, the students are able to work in many diverse learning and presentational situations: in groups, by sexes, in democratic discussions, and individually presenting essay reports to the class, as well as giving a multi-media presentation at the end of the semester.

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here is a sample hand-out that I give to my students at the beginning of the study unit, "The Family" (see handout below). Verburg breaks down her book into seven study sections: 1.) The West and the World; 2.) The Family: Cornerstone of Culture; 3.) Coming of Age: Landmarks and Turning Points; 4.) Women and Men: Images of the Opposite

they have been received with an enthusiasm that I have yet to see in the more conventional writing classroom that I used in the past.

Notice that I evaluated this group project on the family based on how well the students "organized their family unit and how well their structure/government worked in the created scenario/situation." This assures me

Handout distributed for Cross-Cultural Unit: The Family

The following are suggestions for your three-page essay:

- Describe a TV family and compare it to a "real world" family and why they differ
- Describe a specific tradition in a "little known" family
- Describe an alternative family unit and how it functions (e.g. gays/religious)
- Describe a dysfunctional tradition (e.g. child abuse) and how it is passed on

The family unit can be analyzed in different elemental ways. We will use these to discuss our essays and our group project in class:

1. structure
   a. nuclear: mom (stays home), dad (breadwinner), and 1.5 kids
   b. single parent: mom or dad heads the family (usually divorced)
   c. blended: divorced mom or dad joins "ready made" family ("The Brady Bunch")
   d. dysfunctional: parents are into obsessive behaviors (alcohol/drug abuse, gambling, sexual abuses, workaholism, rageaholism)
   e. alternative: gay parents; religious cults; communes
   f. industrial: both parents work; children often work
   g. extended: grandparents, aunts and uncles live in
2. government
   a. patriarchal/autocratic: one person establishes/enforces law (often without love), usually the father
   b. matriarchal/smothering: one person "people pleases," then often goes into self pity and "guilt trips" or personal rages—usually the mother
   c. democratic: family "shares" the decision-making (but often with "days in court" to establish order—"The Cosby Show")
   d. communistic: all share equally in work assignments (and sometimes in love/sex relations) and "pool" all resources to be distributed equally
   e. socialistic: all share equally in work assignments (love assignments) and often do *not* share personal income except for medical, education and housing costs

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Group In-Class Assignment:

Get into your groups and plan a scenario that will show the class a "working model"

When I stand up there and lecture too much about writing or about the content of the essays, I am renting space in their consciousness. But when *they* research the work and when *they* present the insights, the resulting discovery is theirs to keep forever!

Finally, I also present motion pictures that relate to the unit under study. For example, for this family unit I show *Avalon* by Barry Levinson, because of its dramatic portrayal of how one American family, the Kochinskys, journeys from the extended structure to the fragmented nuclear structure, and the big obstacle that blocks communication is the ad-

in our classrooms in recent years, I am sorry to say, are students who are "fragmented"; that is, they learn how to write, how to compute, how to memorize, but they never really get the chance to use their entire communicative *being* in one classroom for one semester.

In the class I am going to describe, the students are able to work in many diverse learning and presentational situations: in groups, by sexes, in democratic discussions, and individually presenting essay reports to the class, as well as giving a multi-media presentation at the end of the semester.

CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH

I use the text *Ourselves Among Others* by Carol J. Verburg because I believe the "real world" of the future will necessitate college graduates who are able to empathize and work with a variety of different cultures from all over the world. As Marshall McLuhan said, "ours is a global village," and my students get an experience of how many divergent systems there are functioning in our village. But not only do they get to read, discuss, and research/write about these different world cultures, but they also get a chance to "perform" in real-life situational role-playing adventures that give them a personal experience of what it is *really* like to live in another culture.

In each unit, I give my students a chance to learn at all levels: research, written, spoken, interactive, and experiential. For example,

c. alternative: gay parents, religious cults, communities
f. industrial: both parents work; children often work
g. extended: grandparents, aunts and uncles live in

2. government
   a. patriarchal/autocratic: one person establishes/enforces law (often without love), usually the father
   b. matriarchal/smothering: one person "people pleases," then often goes into self pity and "guilt trips" or personal rages—usually the mother
   c. democratic: family "shares" the decision-making (but often with "days in court" to establish order—"The Cosby Show")
   d. communistic: all share equally in work assignments (and sometimes in love/sex relations) and "pool" all resources to be distributed equally
   e. socialistic: all share equally in work assignments (love assignments) and often do *not* share personal income except for medical, education and housing costs

Group In-Class Assignment:

Get into your groups and plan a scenario that will show the class a "working model" of a family based on the above elements. This means you will have family members (perhaps father, mother, kids—or any *other* type of structure that you choose) and each family will "act out" a typical day in their home/work lives. Be certain that the class will be able to know what type of family you are simply by your *actions* and not just by what you later *tell* us you are.

You will be evaluated on *how well you claorganize your family unit and how well your structure/government seems to work for your created scenario/situation.*

Sex; 5.) Work: We Are What We Do; 6.) Ideology and Politics: The Cost of Our Convictions; 7.) Witness to War: Soldiers and Survivors. Each section contains a collection of relevant and challenging essays by a variety of authors from different cultures.

I first give students suggestions for writing their three page research essay. These essays must contain at least three sources (two other than the text), and they must be based on the overall theme of the unit. But before they do their research, students get involved in a week-long group assignmnet. In this example, students are first given an analytical criterion upon which to base their role-playing exercise. I stress that it is important to give students something substantial to work with because they need the reference point from time to time. However, it has been my experience that creativity is not stifled by using these criteria—in fact, my holistic learning approach actually enhances the group's creativity at all levels. I have developed group projects for each unit in Verburg's book, and that they are applying critical thinking skills in order to make certain their family group reflects the given criteria. I have had students "act-out" the dysfunctional family (a favorite), the religious cult family, the socialistic family, and even the TV sitcom family. I have the audience guess which family structure and government each performing group has. The in-class discussions are also lively and responsive.

But it is the synergistic effect that makes the students' research papers much more orderly and focused. Just as the Japanese often let their lowest employee participate in the decision-making process (with positive results, I might add), I let my students participate by learning with their whole being—not just one part of the self. Students are able to "discover" for themselves the interesting variety of life patterns that exist on our magnificent planet, and this way they are able to "own their knowledge" because they have not been lectured at by me. In my mind, it is comparable to owning your own home and renting.

When I stand up there and lecture too much about writing or about the content of the essays, I am renting space in their consciousness. But when *they* research the work and when *they* present the insights, the resulting discovery is theirs to keep forever!

Finally, I also present motion pictures that relate to the unit under study. For example, for this family unit I show *Avalon* by Barry Levinson, because of its dramatic portrayal of how one American family, the Kochinskys, journeys from the extended structure to the fragmented nuclear structure, and the big obstacle that blocks communication is the advent of the (you guessed it!) television set. Many of my students are first attracted to television and films, and this is an excellent way to get them interested in the cross-cultural themes in the text. I select a variety of films from a variety of cultures (France, Italy, Japan, U.S.), and students comment that they most likely would not have viewed these films unless they had seen them in the class—but that they were glad they did!

The retention in this type of classroom is pleasant as well. For example, last semester, I taught two of these classes and lost a total of only four students out of seventy. I am happy with this result because I truly believe that this curriculum prepares students for a professional future—not just a future behind "ivy-covered walls." Indeed, as I tell my students on the first day, "We are going to break down the walls of prejudice, fear and injustice. These walls are inside you and they are outside in the world. All learning takes place when you see that true wisdom is the application and sharing of personal knowledge which makes us all stronger in the living world of the present and by preparing us for the future."

James Ray Musgrave teaches Advanced Composition and Literature at Grossmont and Mesa Colleges. He is also finishing a novel about the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy in 1968, Sirhan and Bobby, *as well as a novel about an Iraqi-terrorist-inflicted AIDS epidemic called* The Scourge.

HUMANIZING CLASSES

(Continued from Page 16)

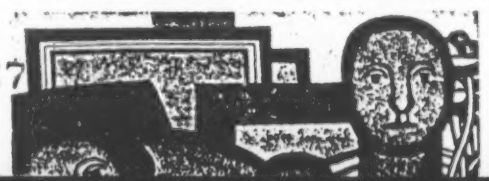
issues of abortion, financial or relationship problems, and thoughts of suicide—the revelations unfold once your trustworthiness is established. From these discussions I have learned of the many factors weighing upon students that affect their ability and willingness to complete courses. I have also found that often when the problems are addressed, students who were contemplating dropping out will reconsider and make great efforts to finish the course work. Students want to succeed, and they want to please. Given the chance, they will.

3. USE "CALLING CARDS." These are 5″ by 8″ index cards, folded to make a four-sided 4″ by 5″ booklet. On each side the students write the name and phone number of four classmates, whom they must call twice a week, recording the time and date of each call. This "networking" establishes class bonding and reduces mightily feelings of isolation and loneliness. I monitor the "assignment" weekly and have discovered that those who use the calling card not only finish the class but do the best work.

4. TOUCH EACH OF YOUR STUDENTS. This technique might appear dangerous, but it can be accomplished in a non-threatening way. I do it unobtrusively by making hand to hand contact as I pass out materials or by brushing or touching a hand or a shoulder as I "work the room." The technique can be overt, as well. Shake hands with students as they leave the classroom; this eliminates the charge for the door at the end of the class. Of course, shake hands when students come to your office. This technique humanizes the learning experience.

5. USE PEER TUTORS AND COUNSELORS. Students will "hear" from peers what they cannot hear from the instructor. Choose former students who achieved well or utilize effective learners in the current class. With a little training—i.e. making clear what you want them to teach—these students can be a wonderful resource for both the students and you.

6. USE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING FREQUENTLY. This is what we used to call "small group" learning. Students



the "parking lot/classroom/parking lot" students for whom the junior colleges are famous. Commuter institutions have a particularly difficult time holding students because students who lack reasons for "sticking around" campus have nothing to keep them on campus when they have difficulties.

The way around the problem lies in club or group activities. Introduce students to these. Since they won't know about most opportunities, you will have to be their resource person, perhaps even take them to a meeting. School work becomes more of a balanced activity when students are involved in extracurricular projects that connect students to the outside world. Remember, a connected student is a retained student.

9. WALK THEM THROUGH THE CAMPUS. Make no assumptions about what "at risk" students understand about your campus. Take them on a walking tour of the grounds, naming the buildings and features that they need to know in order to function effectively and efficiently on the campus. Use a map, but be sure that they know how to read it. Teach them that skill on your first walk; they will like that. Emphasize special places for them to gather after class; focus on unique aspects and facilities such as food service and the art gallery. When students discover that there is more to campus and school than books and classes, they are given yet another reason for staying with the program.

10. TAKE FIELD TRIPS. Students report that the most memorable school-connected learning experience they ever had occurred on a field trip. They not only learn but remember what they learn through this kind of experience. For years I have taken my college students to the zoo and each year discover many students who have never been to our zoo, or any zoo. Field trips are especially useful with the "at risk" students because they are less likely to have been exposed to the experiences the trips offer, and broadly experienced students are better prepared students.

11. VARY THE INSTRUCTIONAL MODE. Lecture very little. Use videos, making your own, if necessary. Use films, TV, and guest speakers. Use collaborative learning techniques and brief student presentations as part of your instructional mode. Sit in circles to avoid classroom arrangements that have students looking at the back of each other's heads rather than at each other. Avoid sitting behind your desk. If you must sit, sit with the students. Avoid boring your students.

12. MAKE VERY SHORT TERM ASSIGNMENTS. Make short term assignments that are easily monitored, easily tested and assessed, and for which students are held accountable. When appropriate, use ideas that students bring up as a part of the instruction. Encourage divergent thinking by pointing it out and complimenting it. To achieve the idea of each student reciting during each class period, the instructor must be vigilant and avoid the trap of allowing two or three highly verbal students to monopolize the discussion.

15. MAKE A SCRAPBOOK ABOUT SUCCESSFUL ROLE MODELS. This easy technique excites students as they consider the people they want to include. Sports figures might be their first choices, but their tastes will broaden as other kinds of models are introduced and as their sophistication grows. This technique provides students with fresh ways to think about their choices of the kinds of lives that they want to lead. It opens new areas of possible achievement that most will not have thought of before. An unexpected consequence of this technique is the fun that it adds to the program by the energy and interest it generates. If assigned as a collaborative learning or small group activity, this technique takes on a competitive edge, and students find it exhilarating.

16. BE FAIR, FIRM, DEMANDING, CONSISTENT, AND PREDICTABLE. "At risk" students need a place where fairness is a given. Much of what they have experienced is not fair, has not been fair, and looks as if it will never be fair. Establish fairness for them. Be firm. Since many of their experiences have been in households where few rules are adhered to, your firmness keeps them from having to test the limits for their behavior and, I believe, their thinking as well.

Be demanding. Insist on work being done and being done well, on time, and neatly. In so doing, you tell them that you think they can achieve. We know that the most highly correlated factor affecting student performance is teacher opinion of the student's ability. When the instructor believes that the students can do well, they DO well.

Be consistent in your style of handling students and their needs. Be predictable. Treat behavior and the expression of ideas in ways that students can quickly be comfortable with. Tolerate no inappropriate behavior or language. Use humor or laughter, but not sarcasm.

17. PROVIDE ALL MATERIALS FROM THE BEGINNING. The students will feel better if they have everything that they need for class from the beginning, and so will you. If your institution cannot provide money for duplicating and such, you might have to spend some, but it will be worth the price—and you can always include such expenditures on your income tax.

learning experience.

5. USE PEER TUTORS AND COUNSELORS. Students will "hear" from peers what they cannot hear from the instructor. Choose former students who achieved well or utilize effective learners in the current class. With a little training—i.e. making clear what you want them to teach—these students can be a wonderful resource for both the students and you.

6. USE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING FREQUENTLY. This is what we used to call "small group" learning. Students

share questions and information in small groups that foster their learning-skills development. The groups also provide a safe place for "at risk" students to explore ideas in a less exposed way than in a whole-class discussion. Since "at risk" students by definition are ones who have been wounded by school experiences, they need lots of protected space to work on developing their skills and confidence. This technique provides that security and can be used for reading, discussion, test preparation, and brainstorming before writing.

7. USE FIVE-MINUTE "GET ACQUAINTED" SESSIONS. At the beginning of each semester, I structure five minutes for students to ask each other specific questions about themselves: their name, one thing they like about themselves, and one thing about themselves they would like to improve. Use this technique for two weeks. Encourage inclusiveness by having students talk with others they don't know. This is another form of "networking" and reinforces the concept of making connections with fellow students to reduce feelings of isolation.

8. ENCOURAGE JOINING CLUBS AND CAMPUS ACTIVITIES. Research on student retention shows that the pertinacious students are those who have some out-of-class activities. They are more likely to finish course work than any zoo. Field trips are especially useful with the "at risk" students because they are less likely to have been exposed to the experiences the trips offer, and broadly experienced students are better prepared students.

11. VARY THE INSTRUCTIONAL MODE. Lecture very little. Use videos, making your own, if necessary. Use films, TV, and guest speakers. Use collaborative learning techniques and brief student presentations as part of your instructional mode. Sit in circles to avoid classroom arrangements that have students looking at the back of each other's heads rather than at each other. Avoid sitting behind your desk. If you must sit, sit with the students. Avoid boring your students.

12. MAKE VERY SHORT TERM ASSIGNMENTS. Make short term assignments that are easily monitored, easily tested and assessed, and for which students are held accountable. Make short term assignments that are given at the beginning of each class, never shouted as students head for the door. Make short term assignments that convene and dismiss each class, thus defining the class time's space. Make short term assignments that provide students with immediate gratification when completed on time and well and that allow you to give frequent compliments. Use "a" to "d" and avoid the others:

(a) In ten minutes . . . .
(b) In twenty minutes . . . .
(c) By the end of the hour . . . .
(d) For tomorrow . . . .
(e) For next week . . . (use rarely).
(f) By the end of the semester . . . (never use, or not until students are really clear in understanding academic time).

13. SET SHORT TERM GOALS. Thus, "at risk" students will not get overwhelmed by academic time. They need to learn how to use their time, and you can teach that concept through the use of goals. The assignments (see #12) are on your terms; the goals, listed here, are on theirs:

(a) What do you want to learn during this hour?
(b) What do you want to learn by tomorrow?
(c) What do you want to learn by the end of the week?
(d) What do you want to learn by the end of the unit?
(e) What do you want to learn by the end of the semester?
(f) What do you want to learn to get a good job?
(g) What do you want to learn to have a fulfilled life?
(h) What are you doing to have what you say you want?

14. INCLUDE EVERYONE IN CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS. Your students will begin to feel that they belong to your group and that their ideas, feelings, and values are important and respected. The comfort level of the "at risk" students correlates with their willingness to complete the course. correlated factor affecting student performance is teacher opinion of the student's ability. When the instructor believes that the students can do well, they DO well.

Be consistent in your style of handling students and their needs. Be predictable. Treat behavior and the expression of ideas in ways that students can quickly be comfortable with. Tolerate no inappropriate behavior or language. Use humor or laughter, but not sarcasm.

17. PROVIDE ALL MATERIALS FROM THE BEGINNING. The students will feel better if they have everything that they need for class from the beginning, and so will you. If your institution cannot provide money for duplicating and such, you might have to spend some, but it will be worth the price—and you can always include such expenditures on your income tax.

18. BE ANIMATED IN YOUR INSTRUCTION. Use the techniques of professional performers. Move around the room and use other voice tones than your "school teacher" tone. Avoid being boring. You are playing to a visually oriented student body, so use all the energy you can to get their attention and keep it, to be the center of their focus.

19. TEACH A MEMORY SKILL. During the first or second class meeting, I teach the "rhymed number" skill because it is easy to learn and it works for students right away. Students love having at their command a real learning tool that they can see the value of and use instantly. Become familiar with memory techniques, which can be found in any number of books carried in most bookstores or in the library. Find one and share these skills with your students.

20. BE "UPBEAT" AND CHEERFUL. "At risk" students need the lightness of good cheer and the pleasantness that you create in your work space and their learning space. Remember, the most important mental health in the classroom is yours, so keep it clear, positive, and friendly. Both you and they will love the warmth of the safe and supportive space for learning—your classroom.

All this is really easy to do. Try these ideas with your students. Add to the techniques as you will, remembering that the basic needs of these "at risk" students are essentially the same as needed by all students; the "at risk" students just need more of the above. Serve these students well and you serve all students well.

John Gardenhire has been successfully guiding highly "at risk" students at Laney College through the hazards of English 1A and 1B for more than twenty years. After some prompting from his colleagues and some money from the district (a paid classroom research project), he wrote a description and "talk through" of techniques that he uses and that any interested teacher could use to affect "at risk" student retention in a positive way.